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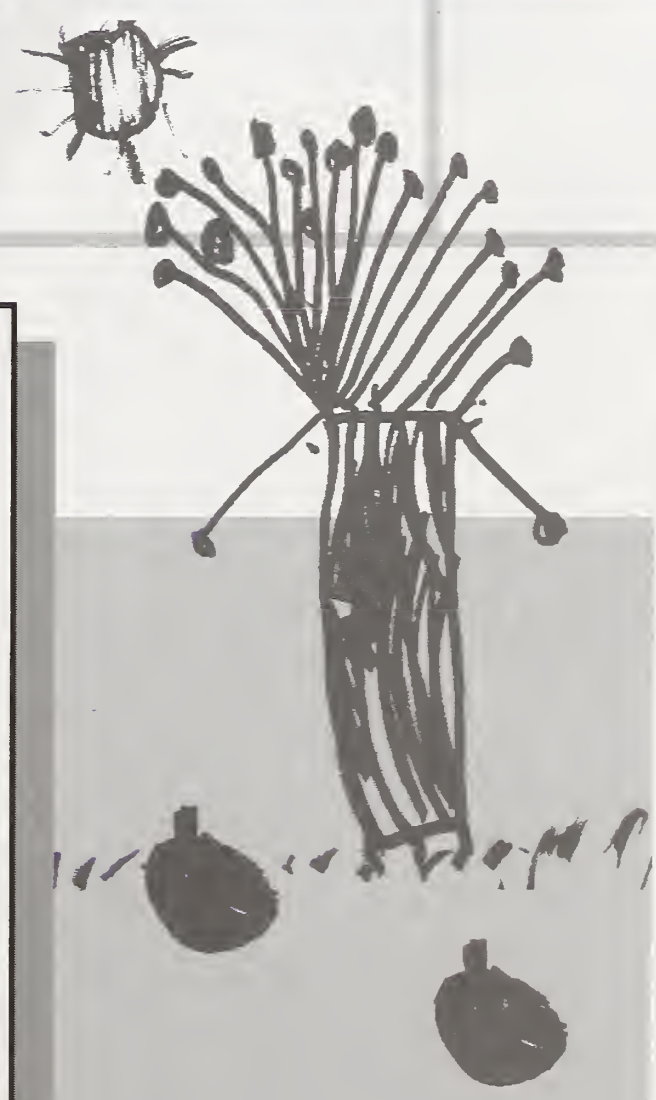
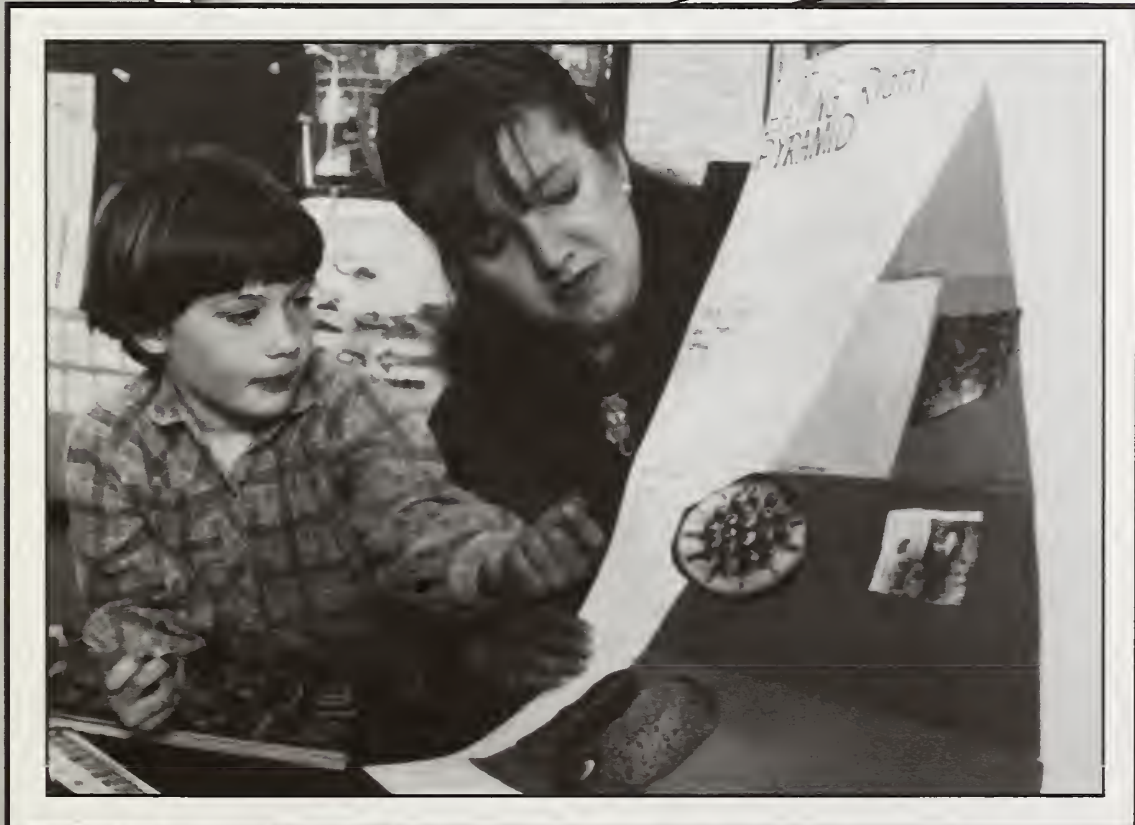
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Food & Nutrition

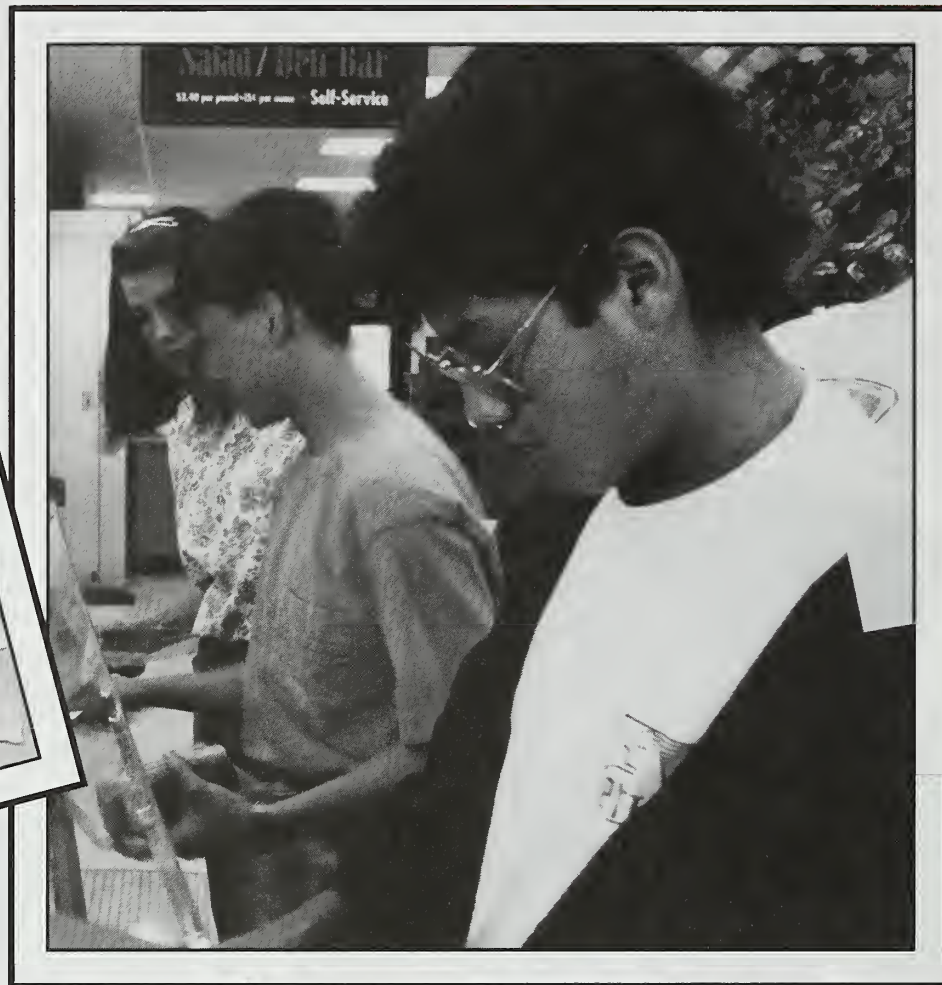
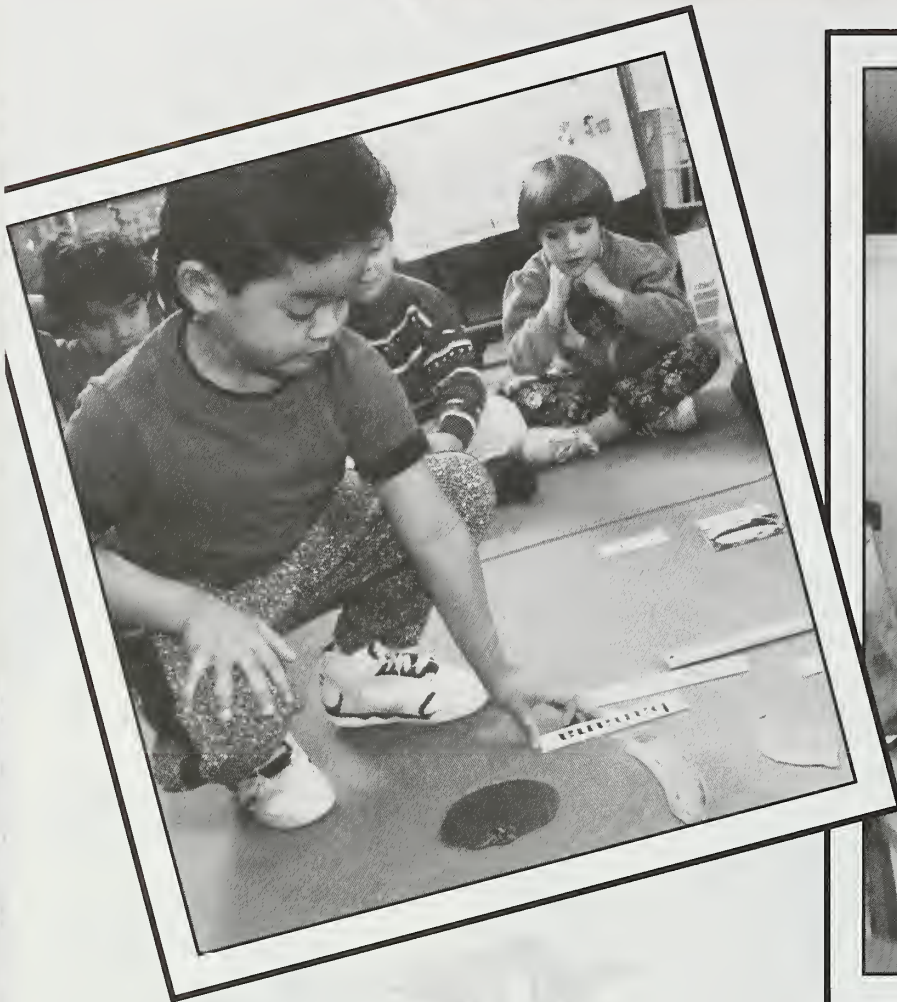
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Teaming Up For Nutrition Education...



When America's cartoon hero Popeye sings about being "strong to the finish" and attributes it to eating his spinach, chances are he's not out to give kids a nutrition lesson.

But his words contain a valuable message: what we eat affects how good we feel, how healthy we are, and how well we perform—at school, at home, at work, and at play.

And it's a message that's not just for kids.

Of course, Popeye's only telling part of the story. Spinach can help him be strong and healthy, but he needs other foods, too. In fact, according to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, eating a variety of foods—in appropriate amounts—is the best way to get the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber we need for good health.

The Dietary Guidelines, published jointly by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (DHHS), are based on the best, most up-to-date advice from nutrition scientists and are the basis of federal nutrition policy.

They are designed to provide sound advice that can help Americans enjoy better health and reduce their chances of getting certain diseases. For healthy Americans more than 2 years old, the Dietary Guidelines recommend:

- Eating a variety of foods.
- Choosing a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- Choosing a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products.
- Using sugars, salt, and sodium only in moderation.

They also suggest that people who drink alcoholic beverages do so in moderation.

The guidelines, originally published by USDA and DHHS in 1990, have generated tremendous interest across the country. So has "The Food Guide Pyramid," a new graphic USDA released in April after extensive testing of its effectiveness as a teaching tool.

In this issue--and our next issue--of **FOOD AND NUTRITION** we highlight some of the ways federal, state, and local agencies are helping Americans understand the important relationship between diet and health.

Our lead article in this issue focuses on USDA's nutrition education initiative, which places special emphasis on reaching children and low-income, low-literacy adults.

We also look at help available from the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), a national resource center for people operating nutrition programs for children.

And, in a several-part article we look at the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) in action. In examples from around the country, we see how states, schools, and communities are tailoring NET projects to local needs and creatively bringing nutrition to life.

We also take a look at how a WIC agency in Wisconsin is tailoring breastfeeding education to its clientele. Here, as in our other examples, teamwork stretches resources and makes learning lively and fun. ♦

USDA Agencies Work Together On Nutrition Education Initiative

"As the government leader in nutrition education, USDA has a responsibility to provide Americans with the best possible advice on improving their diets and their health," Secretary of Agriculture Edward R. Madigan said, shortly after taking office in March 1991.

To fulfill that responsibility, he made education for better nutrition one of the Department's four strategic goals. Support at the top set in motion a range of activities that will affect the nutritional and health status of Americans for years into the future. Here are some of the milestones:

USDA has...

- Established effective working groups to develop a department-wide nutrition education policy and oversee its implementation.
- Adopted a nutrition education initiative to enhance the Department's nutrition research, monitoring, and education activities. An initial budget increase of \$20 million launched the initiative and brought the Department's 1993 nutrition education budget to an all-time high of \$294.6 million.
- Begun active collaboration with the National Food Service Management Institute, a federally supported university-based resource center for child nutrition program operators.
- Improved the nutritional quality of school meals to enhance children's nutritional well-being and strength-

en the school cafeteria's role as a learning laboratory for healthy eating habits. Specific actions have included increasing the variety of commodities supplied to schools and reducing the amount of fat, sodium, and sugar those foods contain. The Department has also established national awards for superior school lunch programs.

- Emphasized breastfeeding as the healthiest choice for infants through the WIC program's education and training activities and administrative and regulatory practices. At the same time, the Department undertook a groundbreaking cooperative effort with public and private organizations to promote breastfeeding nationwide.
- Issued the Food Guide Pyramid in April 1992 after intensive testing of its effectiveness as a teaching tool and launched a comprehensive media campaign for the general public as well as food program participants.
- Strengthened the nutrition education partnership among USDA agencies, including funding an Extension Service initiative to expand nutrition education for the neediest WIC mothers.
- Increased technical assistance, with the goal of providing—by the end of 1994—the tools and training school food program operators need to implement the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

USDA has a wide range of resources available to plan and carry out these activities. Many USDA agencies are involved with food- and nutrition-related research and monitoring, and several provide the general public with information on nutrition and food safety.

USDA's food assistance programs, administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) together with state and local agencies, offer a unique opportunity to provide education along with food help:

— Millions of American children participate in child nutrition programs operating in schools, day care centers, family day care homes, summer camps, and residential institutions.

— In counties across the country, families and individuals turn to the Food Stamp Program to help them put food on the table during times of illness, unemployment, or other financial hardship.

— And vulnerable groups, such as pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and young children, get special help through supplemental food programs.

FNS oversees 14 programs, including the Food Distribution Program, which supplies federally purchased commodities to schools and other child nutrition program sponsors, disaster relief efforts, nutrition programs for the elderly, food banks and soup kitchens, and other community-based efforts to help the needy.

An idea whose time has come

"Nutrition education is an idea whose time has come," said Betty Jo Nelsen, who served as FNS administrator until November 6 of this year. "The food assistance programs do a very good job of providing people with food. But they need to do more than that. Program participants must understand the relationship between diet and health and make healthy choices in the food they eat."

The link between diet and health has been well documented and is important for Americans at all income

levels to take seriously. Former Surgeon General Koop identified dietary factors as playing a prominent role in 5 of the 10 leading causes of death for Americans—coronary heart disease, some forms of cancer, stroke, diabetes mellitus, and arteriosclerosis.

The 1988 "Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health" says these disorders account for more than two-thirds of all deaths in the United States and that diet can play an important role in reducing the risk of such conditions.

Many of today's consumers are more sophisticated and knowledgeable than ever before. And nutrition information to help them choose healthy, well-balanced diets is more plentiful than ever.

Witness the number of articles on food and fitness appearing in magazines and newspapers, the brochures and recipes free for the taking in many supermarkets, and new "light" choices available in school cafeterias, restaurants, and on grocery store shelves.

But for some people, habits can be hard to change. And for others, including people who don't read well or speak English, information on health and nutrition may not be easy to understand, let alone use as a basis for improving their own and their families' diets.

At USDA, Secretary Madigan directed several of the Department's agencies to work together on a comprehensive nutrition education initiative.

The initiative, which grew out of the work of a task force Secretary Madigan set up shortly after coming to USDA in 1991, was designed to respond to a two-fold challenge:

—One, to develop and promote nutrition education efforts to improve eating behavior.

—Two, to make sure messages about nutrition and health are reaching those who need them most: young children and low-literacy, low-income adults.

The nutrition education task force was composed of representatives from the eight USDA agencies that share major food safety, research, and monitoring responsibilities.

A working group was subsequently established to oversee implementation of the recommendations that were adopted and to continue to unify and coordinate the Department's nutrition education activities. The Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services and the Assistant Secretary for Science and Education were named to head the group.

Coordination has been central to the effort. "Our challenge," said Nelsen, "is not only to provide the best possible food and nutrition services, but to ensure that our efforts mesh effectively with the activities of other agencies, within and outside the Department of Agriculture."

USDA child nutrition programs provide nourishing food to millions of children in schools, child care centers, family day care homes, summer recreation facilities, and other settings.





President Bush's 1993 proposed budget, sent to Congress for approval earlier this year, called for increased support in this area. The proposal requested an overall \$320.8 million for USDA's nutrition education and research activities, an increase of \$46.7 million over the previous year. Of that total, \$25 million was earmarked for the Secretary's nutrition education initiative.

However, this request had to compete in Congress for very limited funds. The agriculture appropriations act signed on August 14 allotted a total of \$294.6 million for USDA nutrition education and research activities, which although less than what was requested was still a \$20-million increase over 1992.

"Given the tight fiscal times, we are pleased with our results," said Nelsen. "This initial funding has allowed us to begin to move forward. Perhaps equally important are the advantages derived from the planning process itself.

"The task force has enhanced cooperation among the different USDA agencies involved in nutrition education. These closer working relationships are going to change the way USDA agencies do business for years to come. We didn't get every dollar we requested, but coordination can stretch our resources."

Food programs play important role

Since the nutrition education initiative places special emphasis on reaching adults with limited resources and children, the Food and Nutrition Service's food assistance programs play an important role.

Only two FNS programs—the Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program which serves all of the child nutrition programs, and the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—have as part of their legislative mandate providing nutrition education directly to food program participants.

Over the years, however, federal, state, and local agencies have carried out many successful nutrition education activities in conjunction with or in support of other FNS programs. Such efforts can increase the effectiveness of food aid. For example:

—Information can help low-income families buy food wisely, handle it safely, and achieve a more nutritious diet with their food stamps and/or cash. It can also help them make the best use of food they receive from other sources, such as private food banks and government food distribution programs.

—Training for food service personnel can mean improved preparation practices and healthier meals and snacks for children at school and in day care.

—And nutrition activities in classrooms and lunchrooms can equip kids with knowledge they need to start making healthy food choices while they are young.

Reaching out to food stamp participants:

Previous research has shown that as a group, food stamp participants tend to make more nutritious food purchases than do other low-income shoppers who do not receive food stamps. Many, however, could benefit from nutrition education that is sensitive to barriers of income, educational level, and cultural preferences.

FNS research is currently underway to identify such barriers. Results will be used to develop nutrition education strategies based directly on the needs and realities of food stamp participants.

"Our purpose," said Nelsen, "is to develop nutrition education that makes sense in terms of the way people live."

As part of the nutrition education initiative, FNS has expanded its research on how to effectively reach food stamp participants with nutrition education. The 1993 budget makes \$500,000 available for grants to develop and test ways to inform food

stamp participants about nutrition, resource management, and community education programs.

"The ultimate goal," said Nelsen, "is to change purchasing and eating behaviors."

"This money will support projects that may serve as examples for states wanting to add a nutrition education component to their Food Stamp Programs," she added.

To encourage state food stamp agencies to provide nutrition education, FNS reimburses them for 50 percent of the cost. Currently, nutrition education is an element in seven state plans. FNS support for state agencies' nutrition education efforts exceeded \$1 million in 1992.

Enhancing WIC's nutrition education services:

Nutrition education is an integral part of the services provided through the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, popularly known as WIC.

WIC participants include pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, infants, and young children who have been found to be at nutritional risk because of inadequate diet and low income.

Along with specially prescribed supplemental foods, participants receive nutrition information and advice at the health clinics where they are certified for and receive WIC services. Every participant is offered nutrition education at least twice within each 6-month period.

In 1992, WIC spent nearly \$115 million on providing nutrition education to participants during their visits to WIC clinics. Federal, state, and local program managers actively collaborate with other agencies and outside groups to promote breastfeeding as the healthiest choice for babies.

WIC managers are also working to strengthen nutrition education for the neediest WIC participants, particularly through a partnership with the Extension Service's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), which trains nutrition aides in local

communities to provide nutrition education to low-income families in the families' homes.

Work on breastfeeding promotion is well underway. Two years ago, USDA organized a Breastfeeding Promotion Consortium (BPC) composed of more than 25 health professional, government, and public health organizations.

With the support of other BPC organizations, USDA agreed to take lead responsibility for developing a national campaign to promote breastfeeding. In August 1992, Congress passed and the President signed a law that allows and encourages private funding for the campaign.

In addition, USDA has proposed a change in regulations that would increase the kinds and amounts of food in WIC packages for breastfeeding women whose babies do not receive infant formula through WIC. The purpose is to counter the perception that bottlefeeding mothers receive more benefits because packages for their infants include formula.

Meanwhile, USDA has funded various state and local agency projects to promote breastfeeding. For example, a series of demonstration

projects ending in 1990 used a variety of approaches to improve breastfeeding rates among WIC participants. Among the successful practices were staff training, using peer counselors, and educating hospital staff.

In an article beginning on page 12, we look at how one WIC agency in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, used some of these techniques in tailoring breastfeeding education to the needs of its clientele.

A demonstration project now in progress is looking at the effect of using token gifts such as layettes and tee-shirts as incentives to interest moms in starting and maintaining breastfeeding. The gifts are privately donated.

Some states, in their ongoing efforts to increase breastfeeding, have developed joint educational projects with EFNEP.

The EFNEP-WIC partnership is one that works in many ways. Because the two programs frequently serve the same population, EFNEP families are routinely referred to WIC if they

These Virginia school food service workers take pride in serving an attractive assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables.



appear to qualify for benefits. Similarly, some WIC mothers who need additional coaching in nutrition are referred to EFNEP.

"We see nutrition education and food assistance as being very important complementary services," said Wells Willis, EFNEP's national program leader. "Nutrition education helps people use their resources wisely, whether that means getting the most for their food stamps or money, or preparing tasty dishes from bulk and raw products.

"Currently," she added, "for some 91,000 WIC participants, EFNEP provides intensive and personalized lessons that fit their particular circumstances. By working with a family over a period of months, we can actually see behaviors change."

USDA's nutrition education initiative called for expanding this WIC-EFNEP partnership. For this purpose, the 1993 budget provides an increase of \$3.5 million. This money, in addition to redirected Extension Service funds, will allow EFNEP to provide intensive nutrition education to many more of the neediest WIC participants.

Betty Jo Nelsen called this expanded effort a cornerstone of USDA's nutrition education initiative. "It's another way to strengthen the early education that begins with WIC," she said.

"We hope mothers and children who participate in WIC—even if only briefly—will form good eating habits that will stay with them for years."

Helping the people who serve children:

The nutrition education initiative also called for additional support for training the frontline workers who plan the menus, buy the food, and prepare and serve meals to children through USDA's child nutrition programs.

The largest of these programs is the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). More than 90,000 schools participate in the program and together serve lunches to more than 25 million children every school day.

"We've been working hard to make school lunch the best meal and the best deal around," said Nelsen.

NSLP was born—like the cusp of the baby boom generation—in 1946. From the start, participating schools were required to follow a meal pattern based on food groups. This pattern was designed to ensure children would get a variety of foods that would yield, over a period of time, approximately one-third of their Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for key nutrients.

Those standards have served remarkably well. The National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs (NESNP), a major study conducted in the early 1980's, examined the nutritional impact of school lunches. It found that students who ate school lunches got greater percentages of RDA's for calories and 9 of 11 nutrients studied than students who did not.

It also identified areas that needed improvement. For example, about 37 to 40 percent of the calories in school lunch came from fat.

Undoubtedly, many lunches are too high in fat. A recent informal study of 612 menus from elementary schools confirmed the popularity of some relatively high-fat items. It also found that children are offered a limited variety of vegetables.

Currently, FNS is conducting the first major dietary assessment of school meals since the NESNP study. By spring 1993, an up-to-date picture of how well school meals are doing nutritionally should be available.

However, there is more than enough information available in the meantime to support improvements in nutritional quality. The 1990 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, issued jointly by USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services, offer a blueprint for improving meals served through the child nutrition programs.

Among other recommendations, the Guidelines call for a diet that is low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. They suggest that fat should provide no more than 30 percent of the calories consumed by adults and children over the age of 2, and saturated fat, less than 10 percent.

As part of the nutrition education initiative, Secretary Madigan set as a national goal having child nutrition programs serve meals consistent with the Dietary Guidelines. The Department established a target date of 1994 for providing schools with the materials and information they need to comply with these nutrition principles.

Ultimately, the actions of local food service managers and staff—in schools, child care centers, summer camps, and other settings—will determine how well the goal is met. There are many ways, however, USDA is working to help.

For example, in recent years USDA has improved commodities so they are lower in fat, salt, and sugar. In addition, through demonstration projects and other efforts FNS has explored ways to help schools make appropriate changes.

For example, for 3 school years beginning in the fall of 1989, FNS funded demonstration projects to test ways in which schools can modify their menus. Under these projects, five school districts made changes that reduce the fat, sodium, and sugar content of menu items but still give children foods they like. The results are now being analyzed.

Efforts to help child nutrition program sponsors have been enhanced by the additional support for these activities called for by the nutrition education initiative.

This spring, FNS published "Nutrition Guidance for the Child Nutrition Programs", for use by food service workers and child care providers. By early fall, almost half a million copies were in circulation. This publication contains nutrition information and helpful tips on offering healthy meals that give children food they enjoy.

In addition, FNS is reviewing the adequacy of current meal patterns and updating recipes and menu planning guides. The 1993 budget includes \$2 million to support these activities.

Another important source of training is the USDA-sponsored National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), which began operations at the University of Mississippi 2 years ago. As we'll see in the article on page 10, this national institute was

established to help food service managers and staff improve both the quality of meals and the operation of child nutrition programs.

This spring, the institute began the first in a series of teleconferences that are being beamed by satellite to more than 16,000 school food service operators at 800 sites throughout the nation. Secretary Madigan, the featured guest, promised to work every day for safe, affordable, and nutritious food for America's 64 million children.

The initial conference stressed the need for teamwork among principals, parents, teachers, children, and school food service operators. It demonstrated how to plan meals consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

After the presentation, panelists from USDA, the American School Food Service Association, NFSMI, and state school systems discussed the topics raised and responded to questions telephoned in.

A second conference, in September, focused on issues relating to purchasing that affect schools' ability to implement the Dietary Guidelines. Future conferences will center on preparing and marketing nutritious meals, staffing, and participation.

The 1993 budget increases funding for the institute from \$1.3 million to nearly \$1.7 million. The facility is expected to be an increasingly valuable source of consistent training and research-based information.

Supporting state and local nutrition education projects:

Since 1977, the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) has helped build healthy eating habits by teaching the fundamentals of nutrition in schools and other settings to children, parents, educators, and food service operators.

Because teamwork is central to the NET program, this issue of FOOD AND NUTRITION includes an extensive article highlighting state and local NET efforts. The article, which begins on page 14, illustrates the wide range

A New Teaching Tool

In April, USDA unveiled a new graphic to help convey the good nutrition message to every audience. It's called The Food Guide Pyramid.

The Pyramid is designed to help Americans understand what foods they need, from what food groups, and in what amounts. It can help them put into practice recommendations contained in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published jointly by USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The new graphic was tested extensively with children and low-income and low-literacy adults. Of a wide variety of designs tested, the Pyramid was found to most effectively convey the three essential messages of a healthy diet: variety, proportion, and moderation.

"We found that the new Pyramid clearly defines the role different foods play in a balanced diet and can be readily understood by all Americans," said USDA Secretary Madigan.

"USDA's food programs touch everyone—from children to the

elderly—cutting across the economic, educational, and social spectrum. We need to be sure any message we put out can be understood by everyone who participates in our programs."

A campaign to promote the graphic was launched the same day it was announced in a teleconference broadcast to school food service administrators nationwide.

Educational packages were distributed through USDA nutrition program directors and Cooperative Extension leaders across the country. Information was also sent to schools, consumer groups, and WIC clinics.

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service (HNIS) is including the graphic in a lesson plan for health teachers and in publications for low-literacy adults and older Americans.

"The Food Guide Pyramid is going to be the core of our nutrition education efforts for a long time to come," Secretary Madigan said. "It will probably wind up in every classroom in the U.S."

Because of widespread interest

across the country, HNIS recently reprinted the companion booklet called "The Food Guide Pyramid." The booklet explains how Americans can use the Pyramid to help choose a well-balanced diet.

It also explains that a healthful diet requires variety and moderation—it's important, for example, not to have too many calories, or too much fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, or sodium.

For distribution to the general public, HNIS is sending about 40,000 copies of the booklet to the Consumer Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado. Copies are available for \$1.00 from the Center.

Other USDA agencies are ordering extra copies for their nutrition education activities. For example, the Extension Service will be getting more than 350,000 copies. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has ordered 195,000 copies for distribution to schools and to state and local agencies administering USDA food assistance programs. ♦

of activities NET helps carry out on a modest annual budget of \$10 million.

As the article shows, one of NET's strengths has been the ability of states to determine how and where to invest their nutrition education funds.

Because of the rapid growth of Head Start and FNS' Child and Adult Care Food Program, which helps Head Start and other child care sponsors serve nourishing meals to children, some state NET coordinators see a need to target more educational projects to preschoolers, their parents, and caregivers.

In examples from around the country, we'll look at some innovative projects already serving preschoolers, as well as some exciting projects

targeted to older children, teenagers, and food service workers.

As we'll see in these NET highlights, as well as in our features about nutrition education in other FNS programs, it's people in local communities who best know the audiences that need to be reached.

For its part, USDA is working to help get the nutrition message to people who need it most.

"Thanks to the generosity of the American people, food assistance programs continue to enable our

less fortunate citizens to eat well. That does not change," said Betty Jo Nelsen. "But we realize more than ever that people also require information and knowledge to make good choices.

"The challenge is to promote consistent, continuous, well-planned activities that will translate nutrition education into behavioral change." ♦

— article by Wini Scheffler
photos by Ken Hammond

For information about the Food Guide Pyramid or the companion booklet (Home and Garden Bulletin No. 252), write to:

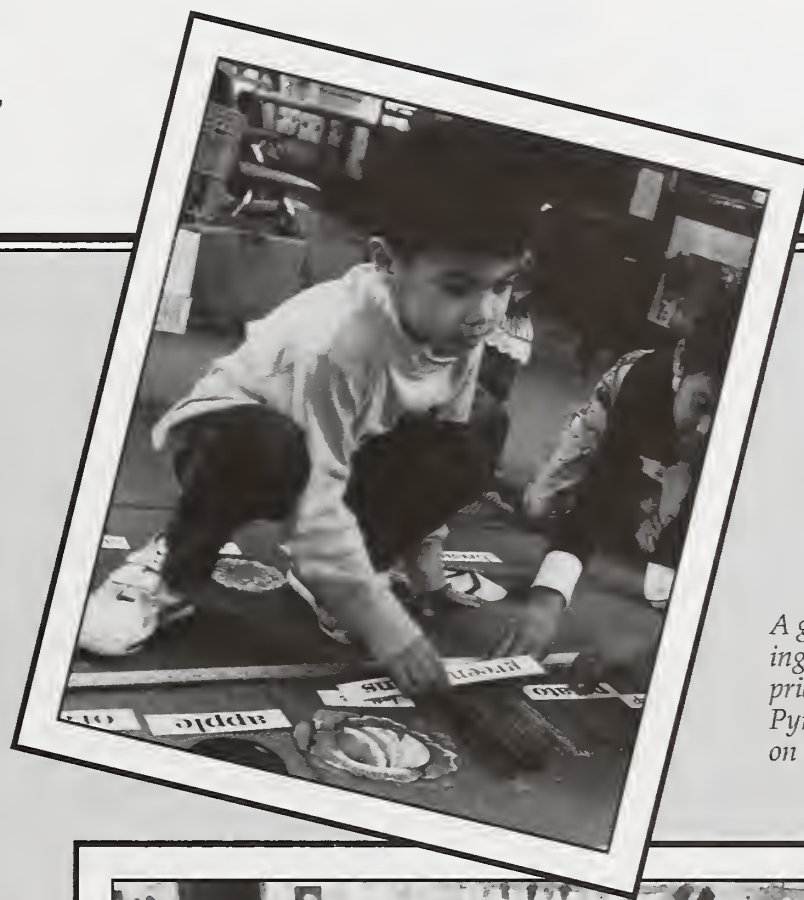
Office of Governmental Affairs
and Public Information
Human Nutrition Information Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
6505 Belcrest Rd.- Room 328-A
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Or call: (301) 436-8617.

For single copies of the booklet (HG-252), send a check or money order for \$1.00 made out to the "Superintendent of Documents" to:

Consumer Information Center
Item 159
Pueblo, CO 81009.

To order bulk copies, in lots of 100 only, send a check or money order for \$65.00 to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 20402.



A group of children has fun placing pictures of food in the appropriate parts of the Food Guide Pyramid their teacher has drawn on the floor.



National Institute Is Customer Oriented And "User Friendly"

When it comes to school meals, few people have as much experience as Josephine Martin, executive director of the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), which began operations at the University of Mississippi just over 2 years ago.

Nationally known as a leader in child nutrition and nutrition education, Martin served as state director of Georgia's school food service programs during the 1960's and 1970's, building a statewide system known for top-quality service and sound financial administration.

In 1976 and 1977 she was president of the American School Food Service Association (ASFSA). Before coming to NFSMI in June 1991, she spent a decade managing major education programs as associate superintendent of the Georgia Department of Education's Office of Special Services in Atlanta.

It's not surprising she has ambitious goals for NFSMI.

Responding to a need for training

According to Martin, the concept of a national food service management institute was first identified at an ASFSA "Planning for the Decade" seminar at Vail, Colorado, in 1976. At that time, ASFSA and the school nutrition programs were experiencing rapid growth and program directors perceived a need for training to bring new employees up to par.

"We wanted a national resource center to help operators develop and expand, to meet the school-day nutrition needs of children, and to help school nutrition programs be an integral part of the educational

process," Martin explains.

Even though it did not materialize for over a decade, the institute remained a long-range goal. In 1989 Congress called for a feasibility study and in 1990 authorized the establishment of NFSMI with USDA funds.

Support for the institute at USDA and within Congress has continued to grow. USDA's 1993 budget includes \$1.7 million for NFSMI, up from \$1.3 million for 1992.

During 1990-91, its first year, NFSMI set up facilities at the University of Mississippi at Oxford and at the University of Southern Mississippi at Hattiesburg. It also established advisory boards and recruited a staff of 20 people with broad experience in school feeding, food service management, research, nutrition education, and training.

Designed to be customer oriented

School food service operators face some tough challenges in the 1990's and Martin and her staff are focusing on ways to help.

"We will be concentrating on research and training materials to help providers deliver programs that are consistent with the health objectives of the nation," she says.

"One of those objectives is to have meals served through the child nutrition programs conform with the Dietary Guidelines. Another is to provide nutrition education to more children—in preschool through grade twelve. The outcome of our efforts should be children with healthy food practices, ready to learn."

One of the first goals of NFSMI, says Martin, is to develop a national

network of professionals to conduct education and training. "Many states have very good training materials but lack a network that assures broad coverage of content and geographical area," she explains.

To meet this need, NFSMI will use a variety of approaches. In one effort this year, for example, the institute brought together 64 representatives from districts, schools, and 29 states to teach them how to form networks.

Martin says NFSMI will also concentrate on marketing the child nutrition programs. It will work to increase participation in and support for school lunch and other programs, spread the word on the need for these programs, and conduct activities related to the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Another goal will be to help children understand why food choices are important. "We will stress the need for variety and moderation," says Martin. "We want children to realize why they may eat pizza two or three times a week, but not every day."

Among Martin's long-range goals for the institute is a national information center on child nutrition which could provide data through a computer network to food service directors anywhere in the country.

She also envisions NFSMI being instrumental in helping schools use computers to teach children about healthy food choices—for example, at learning centers located in school cafeterias.

Serving providers and children

NFSMI and the people it serves are operating in a much different climate than the early days of school food service programs. In addition to facing new challenges, they also have new opportunities.

"For instance, the amount of money going into school lunch is much greater than in the past, and there's a need for strict accountability," says Martin.

"Also, we must help schools communicate good nutrition to children who today are very different

than in the past. They are much more diverse ethnically, and they have access to more food and information. They're also more aware of the importance of nutrition to wellness and health than ever before.

"We must serve our customers as individuals," she adds. "They have more choices these days and the child nutrition programs must gain the competitive edge."

"In addition, the labor supply is also more diverse, which requires that we provide bilingual training. The challenge for NFSMI is to seize these opportunities and provide activities to help schools improve their child nutrition programs."

As Martin explains, NFSMI serves two primary groups—children and providers. To do its job, she says, the institute must serve both sets of customers.

"For children, we must make sure they have access to the programs, that meals are acceptable to them, and that programs are accountable, both nutritionally and monetarily."

"For providers, including state agency staff, food service managers, and school business managers, we must provide opportunities to help them enhance their ability to carry out the programs and serve nourishing food that children like."

NFSMI has three major areas

The institute has three major areas. One focuses on applied research and development, the second works on education and training, and the third concentrates on technology transfer.

The research team will identify needs and deficiencies and develop ways to make improvements.

The education and training team will look into what an operator or manager/director needs to know to carry out an improvement or new function, then design and write training programs.

At that point, the training and technology people will make the training program or information package available to audiences in local schools and school districts, or at state levels. Ideally, these audi-

ences will train others in their states or school districts, until everyone who needs training has access to it.

"Training is never completed because of the dynamic nature of our programs," says Martin. "For example, NFSMI is currently planning a major effort on nutrition management of child nutrition programs for children with disabilities—both in research and training."

Creation of NFSMI is significant

The creation of NFSMI is significant for several reasons. For one thing, says Martin, for the first time in the history of the child nutrition programs, there is now an institute that has specific responsibility for applied research related to child nutrition.

While a number of other institutions focus on nutrition research, none besides NFSMI conducts applied research on the operation and quality of the child nutrition programs.

For example, in doing applied research on students' participation in school meals programs, the institute will not only identify factors that affect participation but also develop a methodology based on those factors to increase it.

In addition, there has never before been a specific place where operators could go for information. Now they can turn to NFSMI and use its toll-free number (1-800-321-3054) to access

the clearinghouse. They might, for instance, want a summary of the latest food delivery systems or information about new equipment, specific foods, or model programs.

"Providing information is one of the areas we want to be strong on early," says Martin. "And with the resources we have at the National Agricultural Library, we've begun to do this."

"NFSMI has a food service educator located at the Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC)."

"...like a dream come true..."

NFSMI will be working in a variety of ways to assist food service personnel in their efforts to improve both the operation and quality of child nutrition programs.

"The success of NFSMI," says Martin, "will depend on the development of a meaningful partnership between staff of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), state agencies, and the institute. FNS and state agencies have responsibility for administering the programs, and the institute is a resource center to help the people who operate them."

She envisions that FNS could be a customer of the institute and a partner in developing programs to improve quality and operations.

"For me," she says, "the institute is like a dream come true. I'm really excited about having an opportunity to be in on the early stages of its development. Our NFSMI theme is 'Building the Future Through Child Nutrition.'" ♦

For more information about the National Food Service Management Institute or NFSMI assistance available through the National Agricultural Library, call 1-800-321-3054 or write:

National Food Service
Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
P.O. Drawer 188
University, MS 38677-0188

— article by Michael McAteer



"...We must serve our customers as individuals."

A special message for mothers...

In Any Language Breastfeeding Is Best For Baby

Breastfeeding is how many WIC mothers in La Crosse County, Wisconsin, give their babies the best start in life. "In fact," says county WIC coordinator Linda Lee, "48 percent of WIC moms in La Crosse now breastfeed their babies."

"Increasing that percentage to 75 percent by the year 2000 is one of our challenges," she adds, "and we'd like to see at least half of breastfeeding mothers continue until their infants are 5 or 6 months old."

The La Crosse WIC program and its successful breastfeeding campaign are interesting for several reasons. One is the way WIC coordinators have tailored breastfeeding education and other services to their unique caseload—one-third of the approximately 1,900 WIC participants in La Crosse are Asian Hmong refugees who have settled in this western Wisconsin community.

Also of interest is how WIC staff work together as a team and involve other parts of the community to provide extra support to breastfeeding mothers.

Serving the county's special caseload

Hmong families began coming to La Crosse in the late 1970's, but their bond with Americans goes back to their homeland. During the Vietnam War, highland Laotian Hmong tribes had worked closely with the U.S. military, often rescuing American pilots shot down over North Vietnam and Laos.

After the April 1975 withdrawal of U.S. troops and the collapse of Laos' coalition government, more than 150,000 Hmong, fearing government

persecution for their cooperation with American forces, fled to refugee camps in northeastern Thailand.

The refugees later resettled in 40 countries, including the United States, with about 70,000 settling in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

When they came to this country, many Hmong had severe health problems because of the inadequate health care they had received. Only 25 percent were literate, making the adjustment to living in an industrialized America and gaining self-sufficiency difficult.

Once here, however, they demonstrated they can be exceptional students. Currently, for example, 45 percent of Hmong students at La Crosse Middle School are on the honor roll, even though many of them do not have total command of English.

Hmong WIC participants have been quick to learn what WIC staff have been teaching them about having healthy babies and the benefits of breastfeeding.

Peer counselors recruited to help

One of the ways WIC coordinator Lee and her staff have reached out to the Hmong community is by recruiting Hmong women to serve as peer counselors. "They identify with the culture and they have no communication barriers," Lee says.

Bilingual health aide May Vang, who came to La Crosse as a newlywed, is one of the counselors. She works side-by-side with the registered dietician, serving as interpreter and teaching health, nutrition, and breastfeeding skills to Hmong mothers in their native language.

"In the old country," Vang explains, "Hmong mothers always breastfed their babies. But after resettling, the Southeast Asians observed Americans and viewed the formula and bottle as a freer or American way. They believed children were taller and bigger because they were bottlefed."

"But when Hmong women understand that breastfeeding is best, they breastfeed," Vang continues. "Likewise, if a pregnant Hmong woman understands she is feeding the baby growing inside her, she eats properly. By tradition, Hmong women eat only two meals every 24 hours."

Knowing how much their people love textiles, Vang and other peer counselors arranged for a special needlework story cloth to be made. The story cloth, a Hmong artform traditionally used for communication, depicts women breastfeeding their babies while participating in daily activities.

The cloth is on display in the La Crosse clinic and has also been reproduced as a poster to portray the breastfeeding message to WIC participants of many different backgrounds.

Other materials also developed

The La Crosse staff have also developed other educational materials for their Hmong constituents, including a prenatal outreach poster and an additional breastfeeding poster. Like other breastfeeding WIC mothers in La Crosse, the Hmong mothers also get a special T-shirt. On the shirt is a picture of a robust breastfed baby and the words: "I Eat At Mom's."

The La Crosse staff developed the posters and T-shirts as part of a breastfeeding promotion project sponsored by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). La Crosse, which was one of seven WIC agencies across the country selected to participate, operated the breastfeeding promotion project from 1988 to 1990.

During that time, breastfeeding among LaCrosse WIC mothers increased from 19 to 34 percent. It has continued to go up to the current 48 percent.

Lee attributes the success of breastfeeding education efforts to the excellent teamwork among her staff. "They not only are dedicated workers," she says, "they also truly believe in breastfeeding. Staff members who have breastfed their babies are a testimonial to WIC clients."

"And," she adds, "the staff offers conscientious prenatal and postpartum support. A contact person calls the mom 2 weeks before her due date, keeps in contact through delivery, and calls every couple of days for the first month. Our contact person is available, even on week-ends, to provide encouragement and support."

Working together makes a difference

Another reason for their success, according to Lee, is the support of the La Crosse area WIC Breastfeeding Council, which was originally formed as part of the demonstration project in 1988.

"The council is made up of professionals from area hospitals and clinics," Lee explains. "We utilize the lactation educators at the hospitals as an extension of what we do."

The La Crosse health department is also continuing its breastfeeding promotion through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Through the grant, approximately 100 people will

be trained as certified lactation educators over a 3-year period. The first training, for 35 people, was held in La Crosse in April 1991. Other training sessions are being held in other areas of Wisconsin this year and next.

Just as the WIC staff have worked to increase breastfeeding among their clients, they are also working to reach women earlier in their pregnancies—and they're getting results.

With a grant they received in August 1990 from the Wisconsin Perinatal Association, Lee and her staff embarked on an outreach campaign to increase the percentage of Hmong women who receive prenatal care during their first trimester of

pregnancy. "We're coming close," Lee says. "October 1991 statistics show the average first visit to be at 14 weeks, down from 5 months when the grant began."

Active in making sure their clients get the help they need through WIC, the La Crosse WIC staff also work to make sure participants benefit from other available services. They refer children for health care and immunizations, arrange for car seats through the local Jaycees, help mothers locate private physicians, and assist them in applying for food stamps or other programs they may be eligible for. ♦

For more information, contact:

Linda Lee, Nutrition Director
300 North 4th Street
La Crosse, WI 54601
Telephone: (608) 785-9865

— article and photos
by Mary Jane Getlinger

Former FNS administrator Betty Jo Nelsen (seated at left) and La Crosse WIC coordinator Linda Lee hold the Hmong-designed story cloth. Registered dietitians Patti Severson and Cheryl Levandoski (standing) hold the poster based on the cloth. Also pictured here and at right is health aide May Vang.



A Look At USDA's Nutrition Education And Training Program

You see it on the nightly news—the focus on “eating smart.” As a nation we are becoming increasingly aware of how important nutrition is to good health.

Getting that message to children has been one of the main goals of USDA's Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) since it was created by national legislation in 1977.

“With foresight,” says Joe Shepherd, head of the Nutrition and Technical Services Division in USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), “legislators saw the potential of coordinating classroom and lunchroom experiences to give children a better picture of what constitutes good eating habits.

“The idea was for NET to be a team program with teachers, food service personnel, parents, and students becoming knowledgeable about nutrition, convinced of its importance, and committed to practicing good eating habits in their daily lives.”

States receive individual grants

Each year when Congress appropriates money for NET, the Secretary of Agriculture allocates funds to states in the form of grants, usually to state education agencies. The size of a state's grant depends on the number of children enrolled in or eligible to participate in USDA child nutrition programs.

These programs are operated by schools, day care centers, family day care homes, summer camps, residential institutions, and other sponsors. The largest of these is the National School Lunch Program, with 90,000 schools serving lunch to approximate-

ly 25 million schoolchildren every day.

States use NET funds in a variety of ways, including to:

- help teachers learn the principles of nutrition and how to make them meaningful to their students;
- provide training opportunities for food service personnel;
- support lively, stimulating learning experiences for children;
- involve parents;
- and develop educational materials.

Projects vary in approach and scope

While NET's overall goals are the same throughout the country, each state decides how to tailor activities to local needs. As a result, projects vary in scope and approach.

For example, a state may decide to spend some NET funds on developing nutrition education materials for statewide use. It may use other monies to support regional workshops or award grants to local school districts for community-based projects. It may also support nutrition education projects sponsored by other groups. These are just a few examples.

In planning and carrying out activities, state coordinators give special attention to teamwork. This

is a good way to stretch available resources, and it's basic to NET's goals.

In fact, the legislation authorizing NET calls for state coordinators to help establish nutrition teams within schools and other settings and to collaborate with other agencies involved in nutrition education, including USDA's Extension Service.

Florida project is a good example

Florida's recent revision of a comprehensive set of nutrition education materials is a good example of collaboration between NET and Cooperative Extension.

Twelve years ago, interested in developing a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 nutrition education framework and corresponding curriculum, the state's NET team enlisted the help of Extension specialists and university home economists through two land-grant universities.

They did this by awarding grants to Florida State University and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).

In 1990, they decided to update these materials. “We chose to revise the preschool curriculum first,” explains NET coordinator Carol Frazee. “Fortunately, the original authors at the University of Florida IFAS could work with us. We provided a \$54,000 grant to research and revise the curriculum.

“We also awarded an additional \$110,000 to IFAS to develop four video segments and write training modules. Another NET grant to IFAS is now in progress to conduct area training programs across Florida and evaluate the effectiveness of the new materials and training programs.”

Teamwork



Materials include letters to parents

The curriculum is in two parts. "One is a book of developmentally appropriate lesson plans designed to teach nutrition concepts to children 3 to 5 years old," explains project co-director Evelyn Rooks-Weir.

"The other includes an extensive annotated bibliography, a small section on nutrition and child development theory, and a series of prototype letters to parents."

Parent education is an integral part of the new package. "There is a letter to parents for each of the 50 lessons, more than in the original curriculum. And at the top of the letter there is space for each school or child care center to print its own logo," Rooks-Weir says.

Among other changes from the original, information on health has

been expanded to include sleep, rest, exercise, and sanitation.

Also new is a training manual for county Extension specialists and educational directors of child care agencies to use in familiarizing preschool teachers with the updated materials. It contains chapters on nutrition, child development, health, social competency, and adult education. Accompanying it are four videos.

Review process was thorough

Because the revision of the curriculum was so extensive, the second edition went through a rigorous technical review. Six subject area experts reviewed the material.

Among the reviewers were three county Extension agents, one from a rural county and two from urban settings. One of them was a Ph.D. in child development, another a licensed dietitian. The other reviewers included a faculty member at Florida International University in Miami, a WIC nutritionist, and a NET coordinator.

"This procedure kept the NET coordinator informed about the progress and content of the materials," says Rooks-Weir. "And the NET coordinator kept the Extension faculty apprised of any new developments in USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program that might affect content."

in Action!

"The communication between the university and the state department of education was frequent and germane to our needs. As a result, the revision process moved so smoothly we were even able to make several presentations together at various professional meetings that involved preschool teachers and supervisors."

The NET staff often work with Cooperative Extension. "We achieve the best product when we draw on their expertise in nutrition science and education," says Frazee. "Their responsibilities center on teaching diverse audiences important knowledge and skills for daily living. We find it very advantageous to coordinate our educational programs as we work to reach target populations."

Staff of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences have just completed another NET grant project revising a breakfast promotion booklet called "Building Better Breakfasts."

Training will also involve teamwork

The partnership between NET and Extension has worked well through the years. For the preschool curriculum, Extension and the state department of education have both provided funds to bring in county agents for the

initial training in the curriculum's use. Regional training for child care sponsors this year and next will also be done cooperatively with home economics Extension agents.

According to Rooks-Weir, it makes sense to call on county Extension agents to teach day care providers how to use the preschool curriculum. "They are in place at the local level to answer questions and can work closely with the child care providers on a continuing basis," she says.

Everyone is looking forward to introducing the new materials in upcoming training sessions. "We're especially excited about the videos as teaching tools," says Frazee.

"Many family day care providers have video equipment. They can use the nutrition videos to reinforce the things they learn at the training programs. And they can easily show the animated nutrition education segments to the children."

The first video segment looks at the major food groups as well as USDA patterns for child care and school meals. Section two zeros in on growth and development, how children learn, and why proper nourishment is important.

In section three, animal friends help put the focus on nutrition. "We are

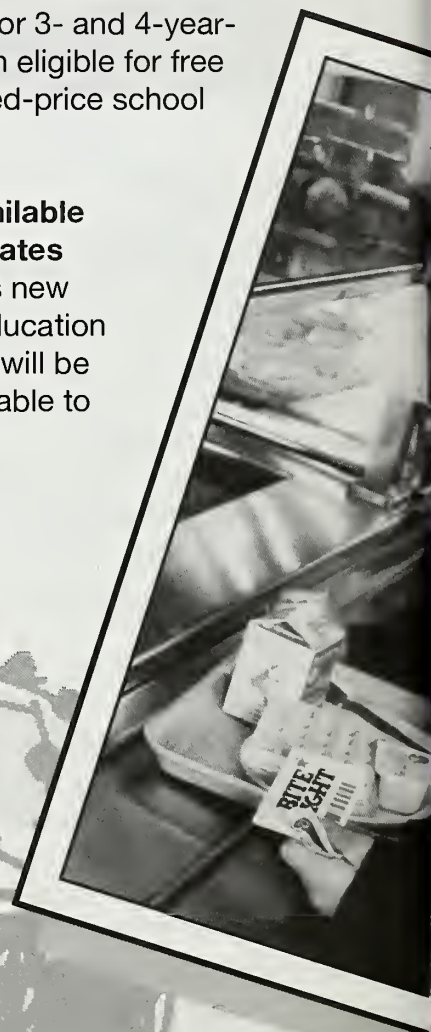
using zoo animal characters," Frazee explains, "both real animals and animated cartoon characters as attention getters. For example, the giraffe, with its long neck, highlights the need to drink lots of water."

The fourth video segment will be for parents, explaining why nutrition is important to the physical and psychological development of their children. It shows them they can reinforce their children's learning by repeating at home the same nutrition messages the youngsters hear at child care.

Training for child care personnel will be coordinated with the pre-kindergarten program in the state department of education. Through a new NET grant, Extension specialists will introduce the second edition of the preschool curriculum to educators in child care programs and in the public schools that have programs for 3- and 4-year-old children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.

Will be available to other states

Florida's new nutrition education curriculum will be made available to



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Will be available to other states

Florida's new nutrition education curriculum will be made available to

other state NET coordinators. It will be in the form of Word Perfect 5.1 computer disk sets, as well as in camera-ready copy.

Florida NET coordinator Carol Frazee will also provide three complete sets to the Food and Nutrition Information Center at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland, for loan to people working with USDA food programs.

Project director Doris Tichenor, director of the home economics program in Cooperative Extension at the University of Florida, is pleased with the way Extension and NET work together in her state.

"We have an excellent working relationship," she says. "In fact, because of Carol Frazee's strong commitment to nutrition education and her support of Extension programs, the Florida Association of Extension Home Economists chose Carol to receive their 1991 Friend of Extension Award."

"We hope our

experiences will be helpful in encouraging agencies in other states to join together," she adds.

ECELS project also gets NET support

Another example of teamwork in action is the way Pennsylvania's NET staff have helped with a project called ECELS, which stands for Early Childhood Education Linkage System. As its name suggests, ECELS links public and private health resources with educational programs serving young children.

Through the project, experts in pediatrics, public health, dentistry, mental health, and nutrition provide consultation, training, and technical assistance to preschool teachers and directors, as well as to groups of children and their parents.

The project got its start 2 years ago when the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics received funds for it from the U.S. Public Health Service and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The need for such a project was clear. More than 250,000 infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Pennsylvania attend the approximately 9,000 regulated child care facilities in the state. These facilities—includ-

ing child care centers, Head Start programs, family day care homes, group homes and nursery schools—serve roughly 35 percent of the early childhood population in Pennsylvania.

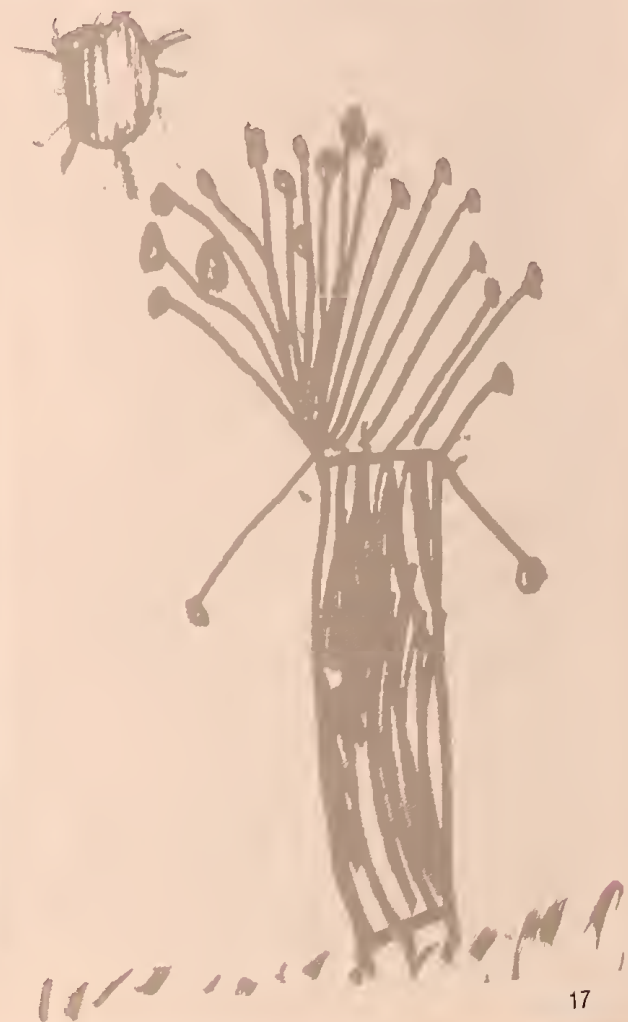
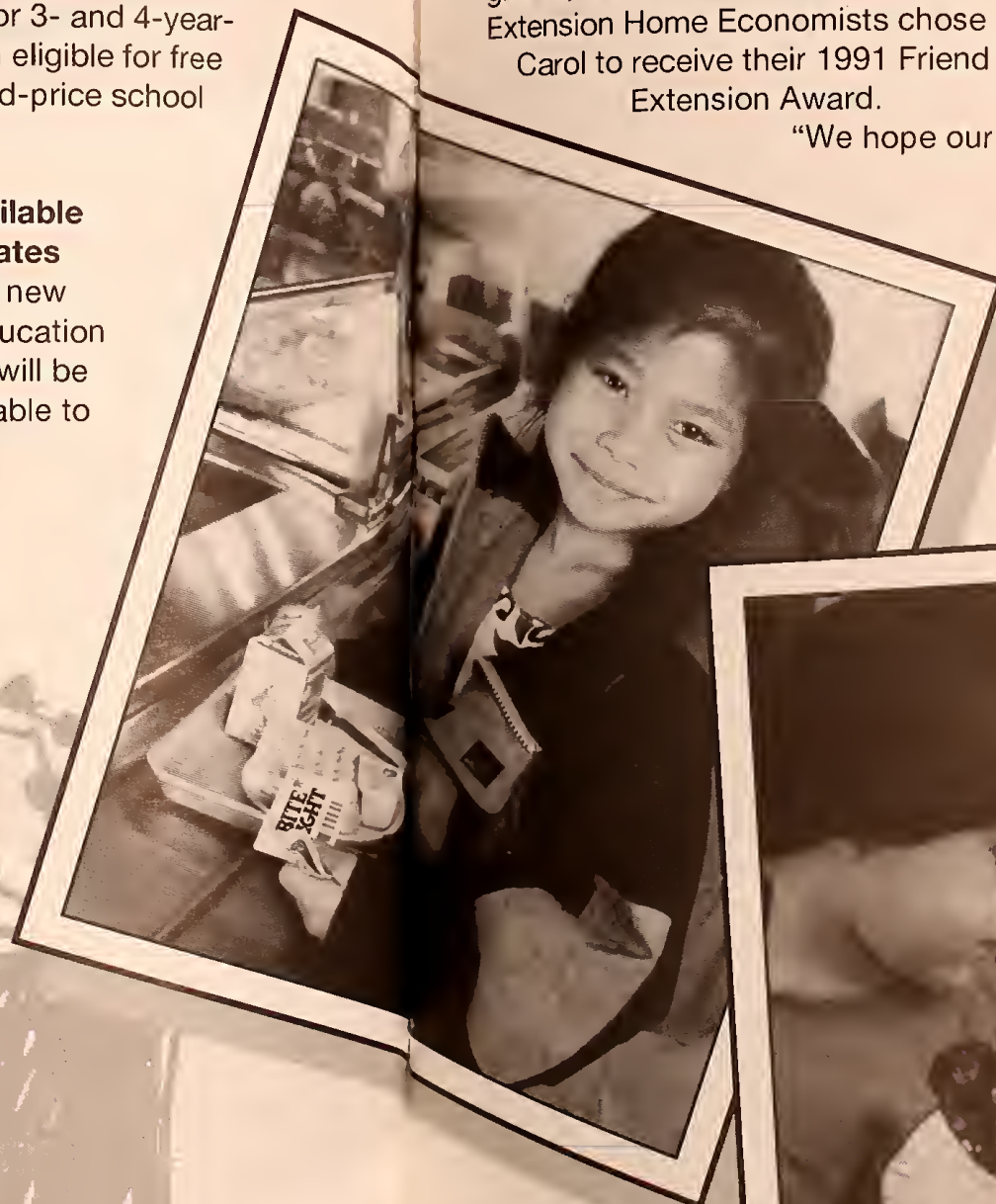
Before ECELS, many of these early childhood programs had been operating with little or no input from health professionals. Now, through the project, each of the 9,000 child care settings has access to a hotline of experts, a newsletter called *Health Link*, and a resource library.

Links groups with shared concerns

Project coordinators work closely with the governor's office, the Pennsylvania departments of health, public welfare, education, and the Region III Head Start Program. The way Pennsylvania's NET staff got involved is interesting.

Soon after ECELS was set up, project director Dr. Susan Aronson contacted Jim Stephenson, the governor's advisor for food and

In many successful NET projects, schools and other sponsors coordinate lunchroom and classroom activities. Hands-on activities, like measuring ingredients (left) and cutting out and pasting pictures of food (right), help get children interested and involved.



nutrition, who brought together a group of people to learn about the project and how they could help.

Pat Birkenshaw, supervisor for nutrition education and training in the state department of education, was asked to attend, along with Richard Mallam and Michelle Bouchard, who work with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in the Food and Nutrition Service's Mid-Atlantic regional office.

Since CACFP provides reimbursement for meals meeting program requirements in child care facilities, Dr. Aronson knew that input from these state and federal representatives was essential in planning ways to improve nutrition services for preschool children.

At the meeting, Dr. Aronson reported that ECELS had collected data that suggested that workshops on nutrition education, food safety, and sanitation would be helpful for child care providers.

"We saw this as an opportunity..."

"When we learned about ECELS' goals," says Birkenshaw, "I said, 'This

is what we've been looking for.'" Back at the office, Birkenshaw conferred with Katherine Simchock, who was then serving as state NET coordinator.

"We were interested from the start," says Simchock, "because one of our target groups in NET is preschool children and the people who care for them. We saw this as an opportunity to work with others who are also interested. While we didn't have a lot of funds available in our NET budget, we decided to use what we had to do the workshops with ECELS."

The state department of education put out a "request for proposal" for a contract in the amount of \$15,000 for development of a series of workshops. From the applicants competing, the Pennsylvania Dairy Council was chosen. Dairy Council policy permits them to participate in a joint nutrition education program without requiring emphasis on their own products.

Using the theme "Working Together for Healthy Children in Family Day Care," the Dairy Council designed a model workshop for child care

providers and conducted six 4-hour workshops in various parts of the state.

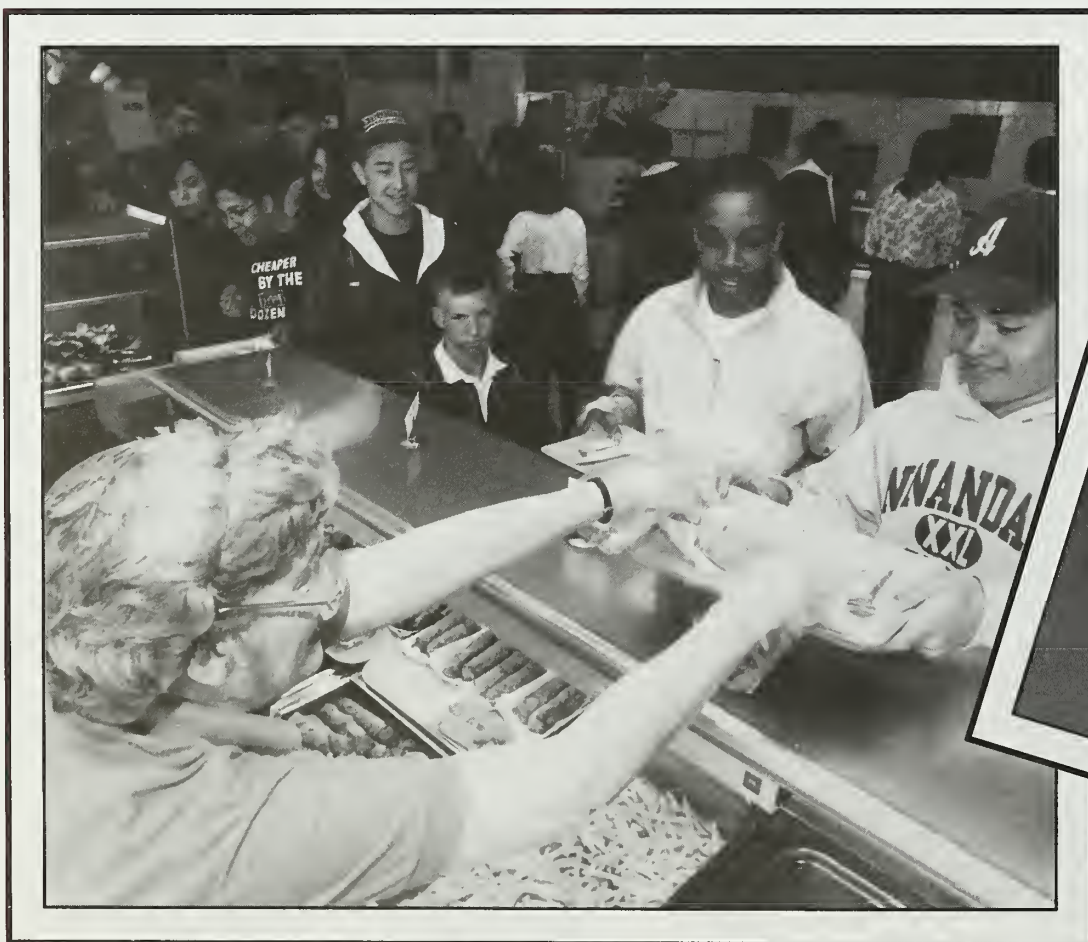
"The Dairy Council did a great job," says Simchock. "Using creative approaches to present basic ideas, they illustrated how day care providers could teach preschoolers about cleanliness and nutrition."

At the workshops, the Dairy Council set up a series of "learning stations" identified by catchy slogans like "Be Clean, Be Careful," "I Like to Try New Foods," "Food Helps Me Grow," and "I Can Name That Food."

A committee with representatives from private groups and industry assisted with special activities. For example, the Apple Institute provided mini-snack recipes and food samples to taste.

Each participant received a resource packet with educational

As we'll see in additional NET highlights from around the country, kids of all ages—tots to teens—can benefit from learning why it's important to make healthy food choices.



materials developed by the Dairy Council and other groups. Following the workshops, participants indicated they felt their time had been well spent and they had received valuable information to apply in their work.

"It's a joy when agencies and organizations come together like this," says Dr. Aronson, "first planning and then implementing the plan."

Many groups help in California, too

California has also used NET money to support a variety of collaborative efforts. One is Project Salsa, a 5-year health promotion campaign aimed at helping residents of the predominantly Latino community of San Ysidro.

Now in its fifth year, the project has received funds from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the American Heart Association as well as the state department of education. It involves both community- and school-based activities.

San Ysidro, just south of San Diego, has 25,000 residents, more than 20 percent of whom have incomes below the poverty level. More than 90 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

Community support has been essential to Project Salsa's success. From the start, project staff have worked closely with an advisory council which has helped define goals, set up task forces, and plan and carry out activities.

Advisory council members include representatives from: the community health center, the school district, the American Cancer Society, the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee, the Community Nutrition Task Force, the Interagency Nutrition Committee of San Diego County, and the San Diego County health department.

Looked at what students ate

One need identified by Project Salsa was for nutrition education for students and their parents. A school health task force was formed that recommended starting with a survey of students to learn about what they

eat and what influences their food choices.

The survey showed, among other things, that nutrition education should emphasize the importance of eating breakfast.

According to Jeanette Candelaria, school programs coordinator for Project Salsa, it was clear that a cooperative effort among teachers, food service staff, parents, and children would be the logical course of action.

"We did this in a number of ways," she says. "We set districtwide nutrition goals. We created student nutrition advisory committees to help plan activities targeted for students and parents. And we involved community institutions, either through active participation or contributions."

Helen Magnuson, a member of the California NET staff, visited the project when it first began. She was impressed with how skillfully Candelaria networked in the community and encouraged collaboration between the child nutrition programs and classroom staff.

"We gained a great deal of understanding about how you can work more effectively in a school district and foster positive relationships between the project staff and the school nutrition staff," she says.

"For example, some parents were concerned that the food service personnel were not sensitive to the food preferences and eating habits of Hispanic children. By developing rapport with parent groups, teachers, and the nutrition program staff, Jeanette Candelaria and other Project Salsa staff were able to discuss and address these concerns."

Involved children and school staff

Learning more about children's preferences was an important part of the process. The student nutrition advisory groups created an arena for the children to taste test new foods and for the food service staff to learn about the youngsters' perceptions of school meals.

The groups also enabled children to have a key role in planning nutrition-related activities, such as field trips and health fairs.



Food service staff learned new food preparation techniques to help bring menus more closely in line with federal dietary guidelines that recommend moderating the use of fat, salt, and sugar. While doing this, they kept the children's food preferences in mind and looked for ways to adapt the menus so they would appeal to their young customers.

They also worked on marketing techniques to help 'sell' children on the idea of eating nourishing foods, starting with breakfast every day.

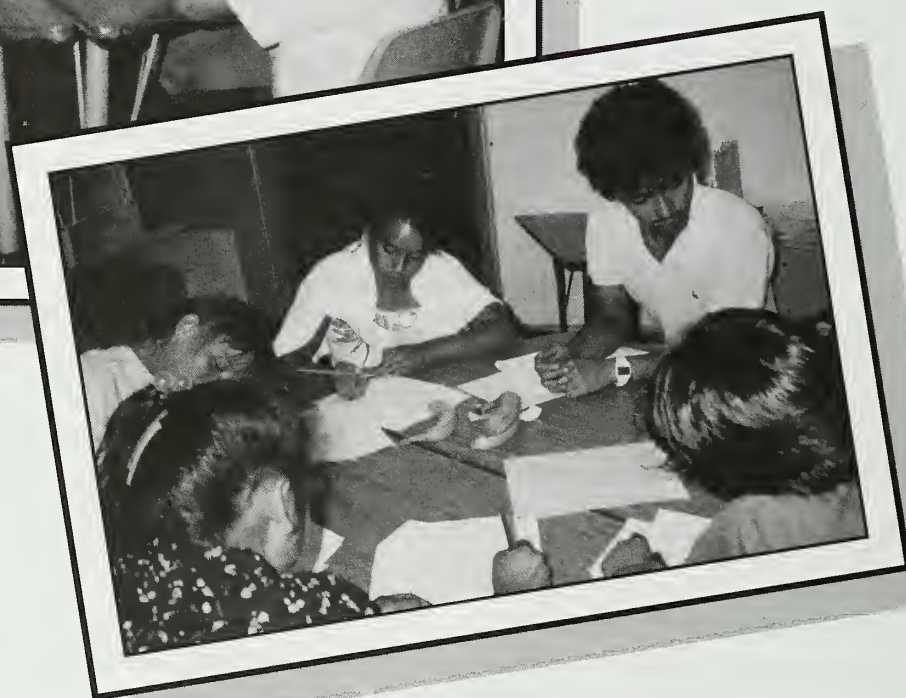
Teachers had opportunities to learn more about food and nutrition, too.

In October 1990, a \$6,000 mini-grant from the state department of education to the San Diego State University Foundation provided funds to send two teachers, the school district's instructional services coordinator, and a Project Salsa staff member to Sacramento for training in how to use California's nutrition education curriculum "Choose Well, Be Well."

According to state NET coordinators Jacqui Smith and Marilyn Briggs, "Choose Well, Be Well" is a comprehensive curriculum developed by the California NET program for use with students from preschool through



In California, students, parents, teachers, and food service staff have all worked together on Project Salsa. The students pictured at left and below are taking part in focus groups.



grade twelve. It's designed to be used sequentially, with each grade level building on the previous one.

When the teachers returned home, they trained six other teachers and four school food service staff to use it. Janice Taylor, one of the teachers who went to Sacramento, is continuing to help with this year's training.

"She knows the curriculum and helps the teachers with it," says Candelaria. "She'll say, 'Now look at Lesson 2 on page 11 and turn to page F2 for the coordinated handout. See, it's all there. You don't have to do any additional preparation work in your busy day.'"

That's a big plus, Candelaria adds. "I really like the way the 'Choose Well, Be Well' materials for children are ready to use," she says. "They are written for children's reading and language skills."

Project Salsa staff translated into Spanish the "Choose Well, Be Well" materials selected for the children's nutrition lessons in San Ysidro. The state department of education is

planning to translate into Spanish all of the student materials for the whole curriculum series.

Another successful part of the school component of Project Salsa has been using student interns from San Diego State University. The arrangement gives undergraduate nutrition majors opportunities for field practice while contributing their time and talent to Project Salsa.

Intern Heidi Sarmiento worked 152 hours helping teachers prepare and teach lessons. "We had to learn how to keep the children's attention," she says, adding that preparing food is a good way to do this. "If kids are involved in the cooking process, they learn more and are very proud to eat something they've prepared themselves."

Sarmiento, who received a small stipend from Project Salsa and academic credit, also helped prepare newsletters that complemented workshops for parents. The newslet-

ters focused on how to get children to eat fruits and vegetables, the importance of breakfast, and the relationship between nutrition and children's performance in school.

Graduate students in public health at San Diego State University also helped. In addition to assisting teachers with the curriculum and instructing parents, they also helped evaluate the project.

One student's thesis project, a plate waste study in two San Ysidro elementary schools, showed that students ate very little of the fruits and vegetables served to them. This led to a poster contest to encourage students to eat more of these foods.

Parents were also involved

Help came from parents, too. Charlene Cooper, a teacher trained in the "Choose Well, Be Well" curricu-

lum, recruited a parent volunteer to be trained to provide nutrition information to other parents.

This past school year (1991-92), the parent volunteer presented a special course called "Alma, Vida, y Corazon" ("Soul, Life, and Heart"). The course was developed for use with parents by Project Salsa with funds from the American Heart Association, using materials from the "Choose Well, Be Well" curriculum.

"Alma, Vida, y Corazon" includes a series of six lessons, grocery store tours, and a graduation ceremony with a potluck dinner. Topics range from cooking economically to being savvy about nutrition claims in food advertising, and using salt, fat, and sugar in moderation.

According to Candelaria, the grocery store tours have been a big hit with parents. "On one occasion, some of them walked miles in the rain to get there. And they were asking hundreds and hundreds of questions!"

Registered dietitian Carmen Moreno, a Project Salsa staff member, led the grocery tours last spring. She welcomed questions, and she knew the fine points the parents would want to know.

"An orange drink is not orange juice," she would say, explaining that fruit drinks have only a fraction of the nutritional value of 100-percent fruit juice. She also showed them which meats are lean cuts.

Collaboration a key to success

From working with the advisory council to hosting classroom tasting parties for students and grocery store tours for parents, Project Salsa staff have worked to reach the San Ysidro population in a variety of ways with a consistent message.

Helen Magnuson sees the emphasis on collaboration as one of many strengths of Project Salsa. The project staff, she points out, achieved positive results by creating strong links between the county health department and private sector organizations.

Having poster contests was another way Project Salsa schools involved students and parents. Here, parents help select winners from the many posters the children had made.

"We all benefit from seeing how each nutrition education project is conducted," she says. "At the time Project Salsa was getting underway, we were developing the concept for regional model project networks in our 'School Nutrition: Shaping Healthy Choices,' campaign.

"The campaign was designed to help schools introduce children to healthy dietary practices. We gained valuable insights from seeing what worked with Project Salsa and what didn't and how they changed it.

"Their success showed how we can use everyone's skills, abilities, and energy to get where we all want to go. We have lots of energy if we work together."

From Florida to Pennsylvania and California, teamwork is what makes NET successful. As we see in these examples and in highlights from other states, collaboration stretches resources, generates ideas, and makes learning about nutrition exciting and fun.

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Highlights...

...In Michigan

Team Teaching Helps Bring Food To Life

"Ag in the Classroom" and NET are two complimentary USDA programs. One is designed to teach students about food production and agriculture; the other to help them understand how good food choices contribute to their health.

This past school year, these programs came together with a new twist in Olivet, Michigan, thanks to a creative high school agriculture-science teacher, Lynn Diebolt-Lewis.

The summer before, Diebolt-Lewis had enrolled in a summer institute for teachers sponsored by Ag in the Classroom. The institute is run jointly by the Michigan Farm Bureau and Michigan State University.

Like other teachers attending the institute, Diebolt-Lewis learned some new things about agriculture and how it can be integrated into various academic subjects, including math, science, social studies, and language arts.

From Michigan's NET coordinator, Claudette Nelson, one of the guest speakers, she also learned about the availability of NET grants to carry out hands-on classroom projects.

Put together a winning proposal

With the support of her principal, Diebolt-Lewis applied for a grant, proposing that Olivet high school students raise goats, chickens, fruit, and vegetables and use them to prepare a nutritious meal from scratch at the end of the school year.

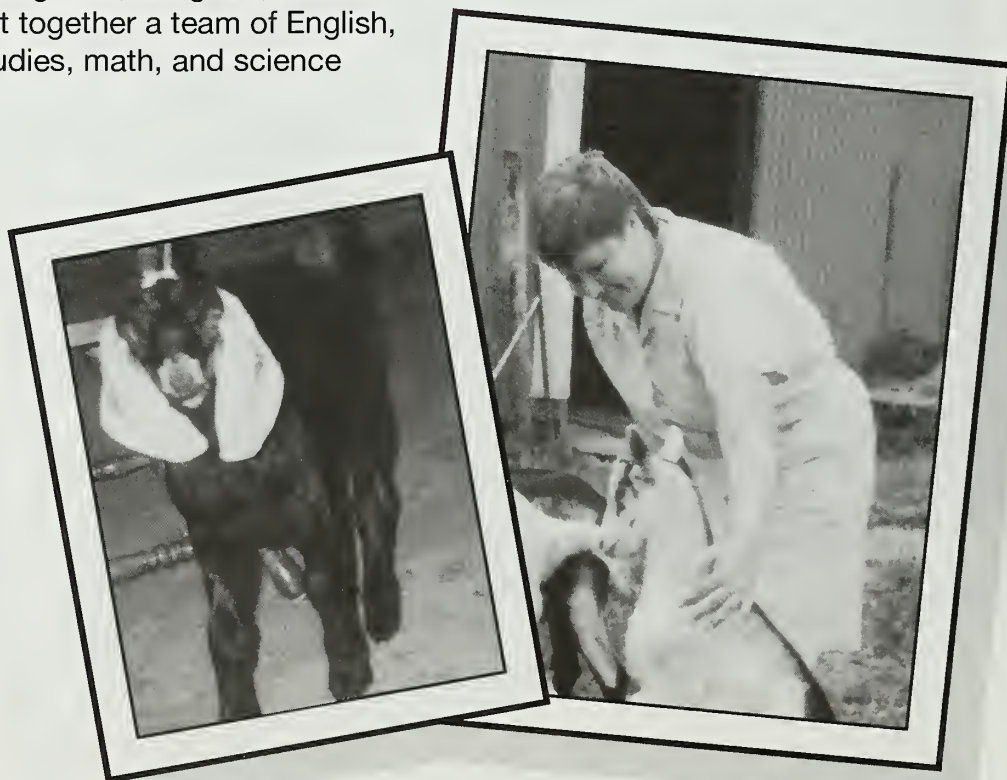
Receiving a \$3,500 grant, Diebolt-Lewis put together a team of English, social studies, math, and science

teachers. Together, they helped 130 students gain knowledge and skills the youngsters will use for years to come.

From start to finish, the project was full of adventures. Even its name was an eye-opener: "Caprine and Chicken." How many children—or adults, for that matter—know that "caprine" has been used historically as an agricultural term for goat?

There are clues. Language students, for example, might recognize "caprinus" from Latin. As young backyard astronomers, they may have learned to identify the constellation Capricorn—the Goat.

For the project, the students weighed the goats weekly, converting pounds to ounces and charting the animals' weights. They milked them and did math problems on milkfat content. They also did ratio problems



looking at the nutrients needed for the plants they were growing hydroponically.

With hydroponic agriculture, plants do not grow in soil. Instead they absorb through their roots nutrients that have been added to water. For the project, the students grew onions, garlic, basil, parsley, oregano, and green beans this way.

Using what they were doing with their plants and animals, they worked on graphs, made drawings, and did scientific experiments.

Made learning lively and fun

Lynn Diebolt-Lewis and her sister Michelle Diebolt, a biology and anatomy/physiology teacher at the school, found many ways to use the project to bring science to life.

"My advanced class was able to witness firsthand the ultrasound testing and later the actual births of the kids (baby goats) they had seen on screen," says Michelle.

Both Michelle's biology students and Lynn's agriculture science classes did microbial stains of the bacteria present in pasteurized and unpasteurized goat milk.

In nutrition, students did library research on nutrients, food composition, the relation of diet to health, and some topics—like the pros and cons of taking nutrient supplements—that are still considered controversial.

Comments from teachers, parents, and students reflect the excitement the project generated and the richness of the learning experiences that grew out of it.

"The project enhanced our special education math class," says teacher Ann Mattea. "Whenever we do activities that are hands-on or have real-world applications, our learning-disabled students are more motivated and seem to retain information better."

"Because most of the learning-disabled students are visual and mechanical learners, this practical experience made it more interesting

for them to learn about nutrition and the digestive and skeletal systems," adds special education teacher Judith Fuller.

High school librarian Edna Schumacher says the project heightened students' interest in finding resource materials. "Mrs. Diebolt-Lewis has added a lively dimension to our curriculum," she says.

And what about the students' perspective? Eleventh grader Kyle Dillin says, "I never realized how much work it is to raise animals for meat, and it's even harder producing milk! It was fun, though."

Kyle hopes they'll be doing the project again this school year. "I want to be in charge of all the goats," he says.

Kyle's parents share his enthusiasm. "Kyle learned a lot from Mrs. Diebolt-Lewis, and so did we!"

Banquet offered some surprises

Planning for the banquet in May, one of Diebolt-Lewis' classes studied wild edible spring plants found in Michigan. Each student was responsible for preparing a dish that "comes from the wild."

Cattail roots were one student's choice. Twelfth grader Andy Winter says they were surprisingly good—"like crunchy cucumbers."

Classmate Ben Crippen says the activities definitely captured his interest. "Having this project made things more 'real life' and fun to study

in class. I really enjoyed it. There is a lot more to this nutrition thing than I thought."

Students learned there's a lot more to planning and preparing meals, too. The banquet featured a variety of interesting entrees and side dishes made with vegetables the students had grown and animals they had raised.

The menu reads like a clip from a gourmet magazine. Lasagna and chili with chevron (goat kid) meat, seasoned with onion, garlic, basil, parsley, and oregano were two main course choices. Baked chicken and homemade noodles with Mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses were others.

Vegetables included: watercress salad with buttermilk dressing; asparagus; two types of "dock" (a wild root)—curled dock and Burdock; cattail roots; and wild mustard greens prepared in a variety of ways.

For dessert there was homemade ice cream in five flavors—vanilla, banana, blueberry, strawberry, and chocolate—which the students had made with goat milk. They had also made goat cheese for the banquet.

"I didn't know making cheese took so long," says eleventh grader Caroline Darrow, "but it was fun." Caroline says she'd like to make Blue cheese next time.

The program for the banquet included an invocation, the meal, presentations by students and teachers, and an awards ceremony recognizing the accomplishments of students who participated in this project and in 1992 Future Farmers of America projects.

Claudette Nelsen believes NET and Ag in the Classroom are a natural match. "In my state, known for its agricultural industry, I have found coordination with Ag in the Classroom one of the best ways to accomplish our NET objectives." ♦

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Teacher Lynn Diebolt-Lewis (left) pets the goats raised for the project. Student George Shook holds a baby goat on birthing day.

...In Hawaii

Teens' Reactions Helpful In Making "Nutrivision"

Hawaii's "Nutrivision" project, aimed at reaching pregnant teens, is an example of teamwork among many groups—including the key audience.

The project got its start in the state department of health's nutrition branch, explains public health nutritionist Mitzie Kodama. "With March of Dimes funds," she says, "we organized teen focus groups to find out what teens wanted to learn and to get their ideas on presentation.

"On the basis of the teens' input, we produced videotapes capitalizing on the appeal of athletic figures and using local actors."

The videos center around two themes: "Choices—It's Time To Eat Right" and "Choosing a Healthy Start." They were pre-tested in seven schools. The students were asked what they liked best about the videos, and many responded they liked the involvement of the students.

Teens featured in the videos

"It was good having teenagers rather than adults share advice," one student said. "The fact that these people were just like us made it easy to relate to what was presented."

About "Choosing A Healthy Start" another student said, "It was good when the three girls with their babies talked about their experiences."

Boys, too, saw how they could apply the information on eating nutritious foods during pregnancy. "It tells me when I grow up what to feed my wife when she gets pregnant," one said.

When they critiqued the video on "Choices," students thought it was effective to have well-known local figures—including surfer Mark Foo and Michael Jungles, Mr. Hawaiian Islands, a weight lifter—tell about what they eat. It showed, the teenagers said, that "a lot of people watch their diet."



Bringing in a model was popular with students, too. "I liked it when the model came and talked about what she ate because I want to know how to lose weight and be beautiful," one girl remarked.

It's helpful for teens to be reminded that eating healthy, well-balanced meals is the best way to maintain the appropriate weight for their age, height, and body type. Hearing that message from an athlete or a model makes it all the more convincing.

Food presented in appealing ways

Both teachers and students complimented the video producers on the photographs of fruits and vegetables, which included local foods. "The party examples were attractive and inspiring," one teacher commented. "The video made healthy foods seem appealing," agreed a student.

Ann Horiuchi, state NET coordinator in Hawaii's department of education, believes the materials will be extremely helpful in getting the nutrition message to pregnant teens.

"I was taught that the nutritional status of a pregnant woman is determined by her nutritional status 8 years prior to becoming pregnant," she says. "Knowledge is not enough. Teens—especially pregnant teens—must practice making healthy food choices."

Just as producing the materials was a cooperative effort, so was getting them to students. Ann Horiuchi laid the groundwork.

"It was good to have the department of education's entree to the schools," says Mitzie Kodama. "The people there have the system to disseminate the information to the audience we want to reach."

The videotapes feature Hawaii high school students and pregnant teens as in this scene from a local supermarket (opposite page).

Materials will be widely distributed

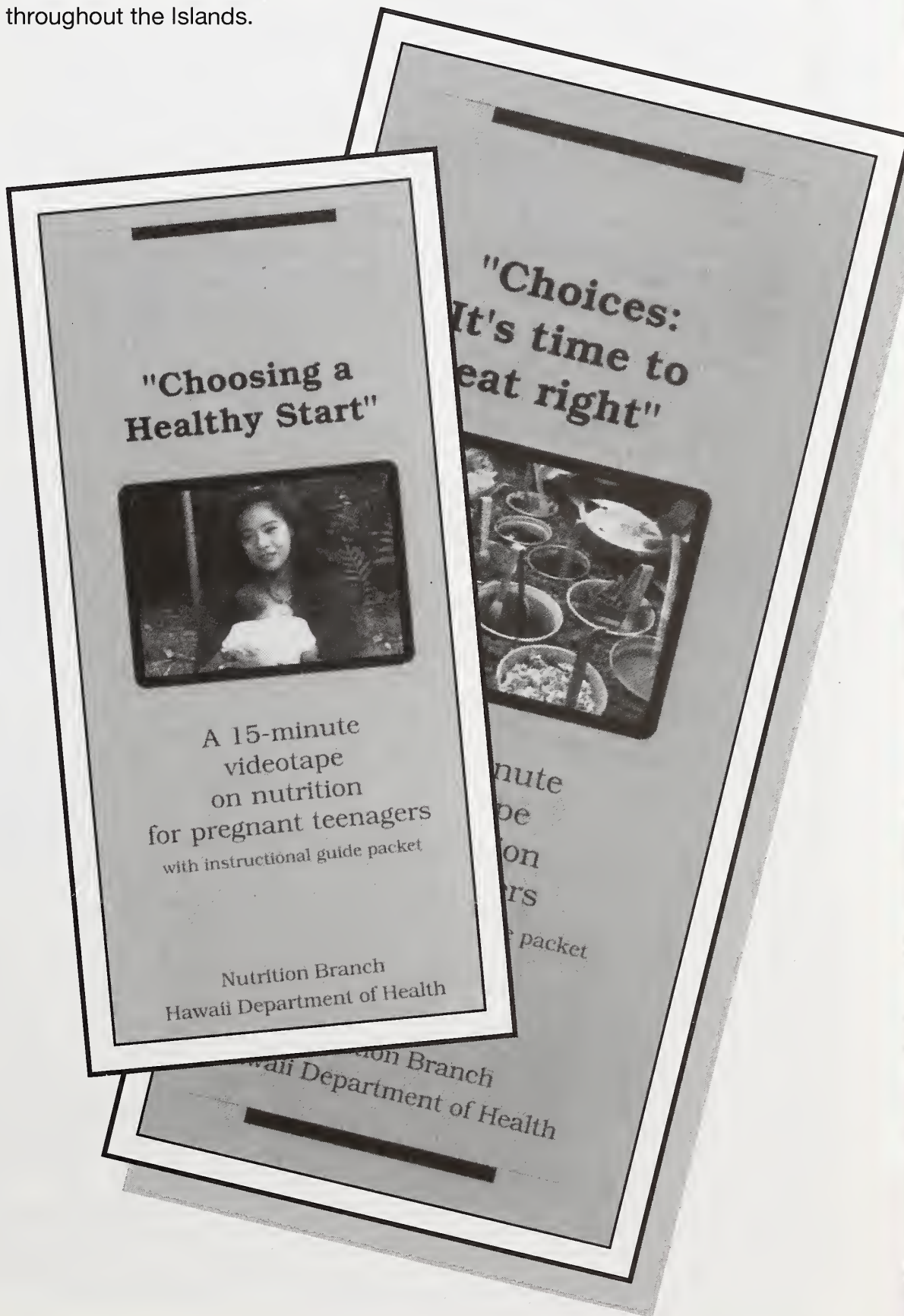
In addition to making the materials available through the department, education agency staff hired a nutritionist to help teachers learn how to use them. During the summer of 1991, 25 teachers earned academic credit at a training course that introduced the videos and supporting materials.

This past summer the videos were packaged in a kit, along with instructional guides and other supporting materials, for wide distribution throughout the Islands.

All state NET coordinators will receive sets of the materials. Additional sets will be available for purchase on a limited basis. Three sets will be deposited at USDA's Food and Nutrition Information Center in Beltsville, Maryland. ♦

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...In South Dakota

A Classroom Visitor Offers A Fresh Taste

Tasting parties are one way to get children interested in trying new foods. But can they turn kids into fruit and vegetable fanatics? In South Dakota, Marie Olson, director of food services for Rapid City schools, has found they can.

Looking for a way to increase children's awareness of what fresh produce contributes to their diets, Olson enlisted the help of food industry representative Tom Bybee from Cloverdale Foods. Cloverdale, a well-known food distributor, is a supplier for the Rapid City school food service operation.

Bybee accepted the invitation to do a series of classroom visits, and he came equipped. For each visit, he brought and set up a large produce stand, filling it with everything from red apples to golden mangos and green zucchini. The children were encouraged to see, touch, smell, and taste, and "just have fun."

Visits have made a difference...

Olson says the visits have made a difference. "Students learned the value and enjoyment of adding fresh fruits and vegetables to their diets," she says. "And when Tom explained where most of them are grown and how they get to our school lunch program in South Dakota, the students realized that having these foods in their school lunch is something special."

Parents report that the children were enthusiastic about the tasting parties. Such requests as "Mom, let's buy some kiwi!" and pronouncements like "I love broccoli with dip" illustrate

the value of these classroom experiences, made possible through teacher and food service staff coordination.

And parents learned, too. "I taught my mom something she hadn't known about picking out fruits and vegetables in the store," said one first grader.

During March, National Nutrition Month, Olson and Bybee held tasting parties in seven elementary classrooms, each with about 25 children. Special invitations went to each Rapid City school board member, the school superintendent, the business manager, and school principals.

National School Breakfast Week is also celebrated in March, and in South Dakota the week of March 15-21 was proclaimed Child Nutrition Week. At the schools, along with the tasting parties, there were tours of the production kitchens, and guests from the community were invited to have lunch with the children in any school, any day.

The school district's 25 schools serve lunch to more than 8,000 children daily. They also serve breakfast to the children and prepare and serve meals to school district employees.

Obviously, Marie Olson has a big job. But she still manages to find time to work with teachers and children on classroom activities that are fun and educational.

"In our NET workshops, we encourage school food service personnel to do classroom activities," says Sandy Kangas, acting NET coordinator in South Dakota. "We hope they'll be inspired by Marie's example."

Children respond enthusiastically

From the thank-you notes and drawings Olson and Bybee have received from children, the classroom activities made a big impression. Sharon Stern, first-grade teacher at Grandview School, wrote: "Thank you so much for coming to my classroom...What a wonderful way for my children to learn more about nutrition."

Terri Hogarth, fifth-grade teacher at Rapid Valley, sent letters from her students. "My favorite part was the education on the foods," wrote Dustin D. Floyd. "I think that other schools would enjoy this, too. Please come again!"

As a result, Cloverdale Foods is thinking about presenting some programs in North Dakota, since the company's headquarters are located there. Olson is anticipating continuing the tasting parties in Rapid City, too.

Parents in both North and South Dakota may be hearing: "More broccoli, please!" ♦

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Dear Mrs Olson

Thank you for s
our class to sam
and vegetables All the
kinds were very delicious

We are all going to try to
eat more and vegetables We

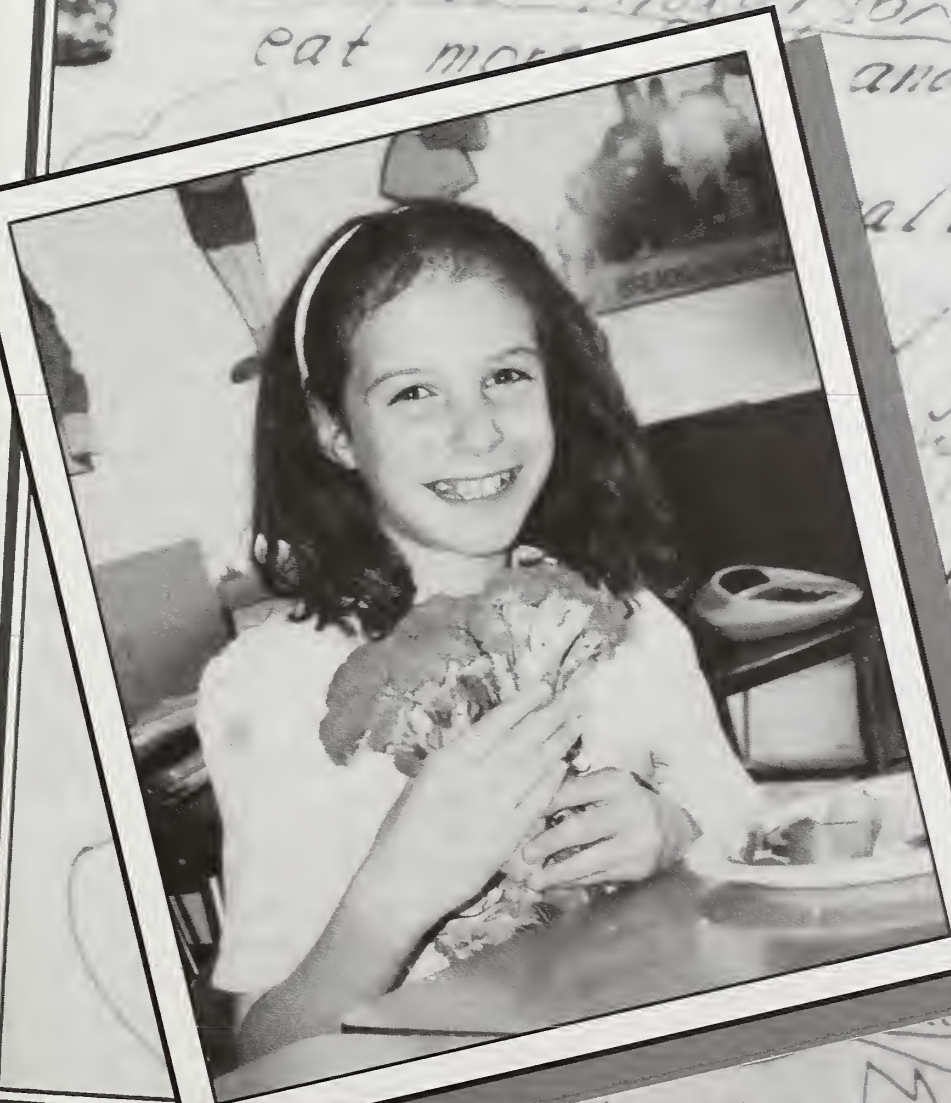
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Stephen Warner.

Marianne Mc Guire



...In North Dakota

Schools Take Team Approach To Training

In North Dakota, NET coordinator Loris Freier is encouraging school teamwork by offering mini-grants to support in-service training for teachers.

The state also awards mini-grants on a competitive basis to help schools purchase materials and conduct more comprehensive school nutrition education projects.

As Freier explains, schools have used the mini-grants to put together a variety of in-service training programs for teachers, and using teamwork has been very effective. "Many of these programs involve school administrators, the food service staff, parents, and other members of the community who may benefit," she says.

When a grant is awarded, Freier works with the school district to find a resource person to teach the in-service course. The person is often a home economics instructor, a registered dietitian, an Extension home economist, or a licensed nutritionist.

Everyone likes team approach

The instructors as well as workshop participants like having many people involved in the training. "To do a workshop when a whole team is involved is rewarding," says nutrition education consultant Pam Vukelic of Bismarck, who conducted a training program in the Selfridge School District. "And getting the message to everyone at the same time ensures the success of the project."

Selfridge was awarded a \$500 mini-grant to fund a 7-hour program, presented in two afterschool sessions. According to district superintendent Robert Braun, who was very support-

ive of the project, the team approach was a natural for the district.

"As small as our school community is," he says, "we really work closely in all we do. People attending the nutrition workshop weren't there because they were required to be, but because they're all dependent on each other to carry it out.

"That's why the principals, coaches, cooks, teachers, and teachers' aides all feel the commitment they do. We sent a letter home to all parents inviting them to participate, too."

Training targeted to the district

Districts receiving in-service grants must have teachers complete a survey indicating which nutrition topics they need to know more about. Based on Selfridge teachers' responses, Vukelic identified two priority areas.

"I included an overview of nutritional requirements in relation to health, then provided more indepth information on how to meet daily nutrition needs by eating the right variety of foods," she says.

Holding the two sessions one month apart in February and March gave teachers an opportunity to try out nutrition activities in their classrooms and come back with feedback and questions. As well as working with the students, the teachers gathered personal information about their own nutritional status and habits.

In addition to all of the district's teachers, a number of parents participated, including the parent-teacher organization president, Cheryl Feist, who helped with the grant application process.



"The parents learned some of the foods they typically fed their children weren't the best choices," says Braun.

Results were noticeable

There were many noticeable results from the training. "After teachers introduced new foods in classroom nutrition activities, we could see that students were more interested in trying different foods offered in the cafeteria. We also now have more students who regularly participate in school lunch," says Braun.

"I have also noticed much more excitement among the teachers about doing nutrition activities. In fact, some of them spent their own money to get additional resource materials. We've already submitted a proposal for a mini-grant to purchase more materials for next year."

In all, 91 North Dakota school districts received mini-grants last year. Eight of the grants were for in-service teacher training. This year a number of new schools as well as some previous grantees are submitting proposals for projects. ♦

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...In the Southwest

Schools Sign Up To "Build A... Better World"

As a result of a cooperative effort called "Project 2001," many schools in the Southwest are adopting a new slogan: "Build a Better Body, Build a Better World."

Project 2001 is designed to give schools tools they can use in getting students and parents interested in nutrition education. It's also aimed at helping schools bring their meals in line with federal dietary guidelines and to demonstrate how far they've already come in offering students healthy lunch choices.

Now in its second year, this pilot project was developed by the Food and Nutrition Service's Southwest regional office (SWRO) together with state NET coordinators and school food service directors in five states—Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Ohio, and Texas.

"In the past, school systems working to implement the U.S. Dietary Guidelines have not had the resources to promote or market their efforts," says Alice Carroll, state NET coordinator in Louisiana.

"For example, many schools were offering low-calorie salad dressings, but did not advertise that fact. They were also baking rather than frying breaded items, and making changes like using more whole-grain flour and serving more fresh fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, no one but the school food service personnel knew what a good job they were doing.

"The average school food service supervisor and manager didn't think they had the time or the skills to promote their programs or themselves," Carroll adds. "Project 2001 has given them a tool for tooting their own horn."

Newspaper coverage of Project 2001 has helped publicize the project in communities throughout Louisiana. One reporter, in fact, challenged parents "to serve the same caliber meals to children at home as they receive at school." The Louisiana parent-teacher association and the Louisiana Nutrition Council have published articles in their newsletters based on information Alice Carroll provided.

Several states worked together

"Project 2001: Nutrition For A New Century" is the project's complete name. It got its start in the spring of 1991 when Louise Lapeze, regional nutrition coordinator in FNS' Southwest office, was looking for ways to help spread the word on the innovations taking place in school meals.

She got in touch with school nutrition staff in the region's five states and suggested they form a project team. Team members agreed to explore ways to help schools continue to make improvements and get credit for what they were doing.

They also agreed it was important to give parents ideas about how schools and the community can work together on nutrition education for children.

"We know that school food service directors have incredible demands placed on them," says Lapeze. "Simply operating a successful program requires most of their efforts and frequently little time or resources are left that could be used to develop local nutrition education projects."

Team members decided on a two-pronged approach. First, they would

establish some basic criteria schools would agree to meet in order to participate in Project 2001. Second, with the criteria in place, they would develop a series of attractive nutrition education fact sheets schools could reproduce and use locally.

"The NET coordinators gave us their full support," says Lapeze. "Along with other state agency personnel and some local school food service directors, they helped us select the criteria and develop the fact sheets."

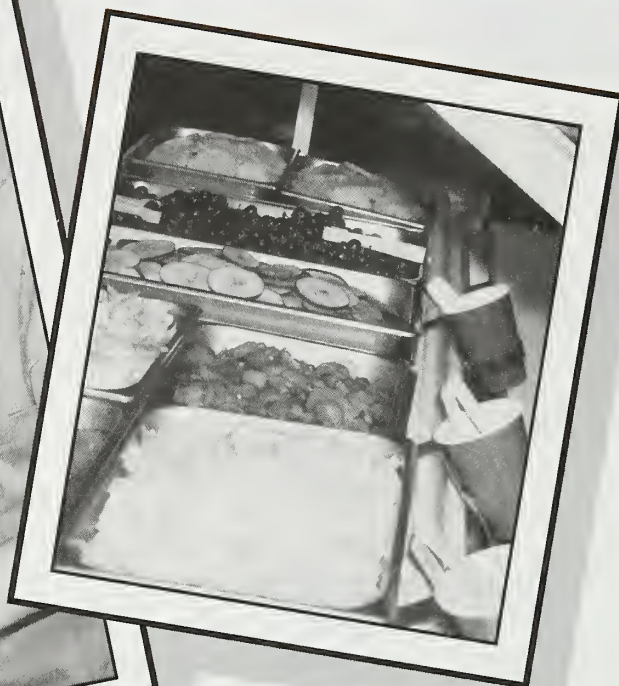
Practical steps schools can take

The criteria provide guidance schools can use to help bring their meals in line with the latest nutritional knowledge.

The criteria are consistent with the kinds of changes USDA is recommending schools make nationwide to implement the federal dietary guidelines. They do not change or substitute for the nutritional requirements of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the meal patterns NSLP schools follow.

At Madisonville Elementary in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, first grader Ashley Thomas helps herself to some fresh red grapes.





Casey Strander, another Madisonville student, selects fresh pineapple for dessert. He's also having a hamburger on a whole wheat bun (baked that morning at school), french fried potatoes, fresh red grapes, and skim milk.

Using Project 2001 criteria:

- Schools emphasize reducing the levels of fat, sodium, and sugar in meals they serve to children. This affects not only how they plan menus, but also how they procure and prepare food.
- They offer a fresh fruit or vegetable every day. Also on a daily basis, they offer at least one item containing whole-grain flour or meal, such as cornmeal. This might be a bread or bread alternate, or a dessert. In addition, they offer dry beans or peas at least once a week.
- Schools using a single menu (as opposed to offering students a choice of several menus) limit to once a week the number of times they include processed meats or meat alternates that have not been modified to reduce fat and/or sodium. At each meal these schools offer no more than one high-fat menu item.
- In addition, schools provide salt shakers and butter only at students' request. They offer unflavored low-fat milk (containing no more than 1-percent milkfat) and unflavored skim milk.

Project materials are reproducible

Nutrition education materials developed for the project include reproducible sheets participating schools can personalize. On each is Project 2001's distinctive logo and border. The slogan "Build a Better Body, Build a Better World" is also on the attractive stickers and buttons developed for the project.

Each school receives a sheet of black-and-white camera-ready copies of the logo. They use these, for example, on school menus and correspondence, on press releases and letters to parents, and on the 16 camera-ready nutrition education sheets that contain information on the dietary guidelines and related topics.

"Project 2001 has given our NET program a focus for promoting the U.S. dietary guidelines," says Alice Carroll. "The criteria are clearly defined and realistic in scope."

"We are pleased to have a central theme that is identifiable throughout the state," she adds. "Project 2001 is neatly packaged with professional graphics that appeal to students, parents, school personnel, and food service staff."

A local school system may choose any number of schools to participate; some begin with one school and add others later on. They can join any time during the school year. The first step is an agreement signed by USDA, the state agency, and several people in the school district—the superintendent, the food service director, the school principal, and the lunch program manager.

"This ensures the support of the entire school system," says Lapeze. "We emphasize that the project is strictly voluntary and that the school system will not be monitored by USDA or the state for adherence to project criteria."

"But we also emphasize that the nutrition education sheets tell parents what the school will be doing to implement the dietary guidelines. So schools will be monitored by the students, parents, and teachers, and they will quickly lose credibility if they do not do what they say they are going to do."

Carroll agrees. "We're here to serve as liaison and to coordinate, not to monitor," she says. "The school districts like the idea that Project 2001 can be implemented on an honor system."

When Carroll first introduced the project in her state at a summer 1991 Louisiana School Food Service Association conference, food service directors in a number of parishes were eager to participate. ("Parish" is used instead of "school district" in Louisiana.)

Sylvia Hornsby-Dunn, child nutrition programs director for St. Tammany Parish, began Project 2001 at Whispering Forest Elementary School in Slidell the following October. She found Project 2001 criteria easy to meld with the "Go-Grow-Glow" program she had put into place 6 years earlier, focusing on the nutritional needs of kindergartners and first graders.

With support from principals and teachers, by the end of the school year all 43 schools in St. Tammany Parish were participating.

Project works for several reasons

Hornsby-Dunn believes Project 2001 works for several reasons. "First," she says, "there is a united commitment at the federal, state, and local levels to serve nutritional meals that reinforce the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Also, Project 2001 provides current information for students, parents, and staff on the Dietary Guidelines and USDA's child nutrition programs.

"And," she adds, "very important in economically challenging times, USDA makes it possible for us to reinforce our efforts in a very professional way by providing the materials we need to reach parents and the community."

In Texas, more than 200 public schools, including all schools in Fort Worth, participated in Project 2001 this past school year. Eighteen private schools and residential child care institutions also participated.

Lapeze and Texas NET coordinator Deborah Simpson introduced the project to public school staff through quarterly regional meetings of the Texas School Food Service Association. They sent letters and brochures to the private schools.

In Oklahoma, Joanie Hildenbrand, then serving as NET coordinator, invited Lapeze to introduce the

project at a workshop held in the spring of 1991. Approximately 220 school food service representatives attended and learned the eight criteria they must meet to participate.

"Everyone was pretty positive," says Hildenbrand, "and more than 200 people obtained the required signature of the school principal or superintendent and signed up." Additional workshops followed in each of the four regions of the state and 400 more people enrolled.

This past June, Hildenbrand asked the Associated Milk Producers to present their popular "Trimming the Fat" training session as part of a 3-hour workshop.

"The food service personnel are sold on Project 2001 as the practical, logical way to go," she says. "Next year we will go out to schools and work with them one-on-one on implementing it."

Deborah Simpson has decided to offer a special incentive for Project 2001 schools in Texas. In preparing her 1993 NET budget, Simpson set aside monies to help participating schools with possible additional costs of promoting the project in their communities.

She asked schools to submit applications by June proposing how they would use supplemental funds. She'll be sharing with other schools

information on the creative activities carried out by those schools that have been awarded grants.

More schools are signing up

During Project 2001's first year, a total of 105 school districts—representing 619 schools in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas—took part. At workshops this past summer, Lapeze and state NET coordinators introduced the project to representatives from school districts in New Mexico and Arkansas.

They are pleased with how the project has come together. "From our experience this past year," says Lapeze, "we believe that participation by schools, through their state NET programs, creates a federal, state, and local partnership which promotes better nutrition and better education for our children." ♦

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— article by Martha Poolton

Nutrition Education & Training

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*Drawings by Amanda Kronen, age 6,
from Marietta, New York*